



PS3
PlayStation 3

PSP
PlayStation Portable

PlayStation® 2

PlayStation Network

PlayStation® Official Magazine - Australia

JUNE ISSUE 2010
100% Australian Content

VERDICT!

UFC 2010

It'll spinning backfist
your face off!

CO-OP
UNVEILED!
**DEAD
RISING 2**
Many hands make
light work
(of the undead)

EXPOSED!

**HARD-
BOILED**

GTA meets John
Woo in True Crime!

FIRST LOOK!

F.3.A.R.

Evil is pregnant, and
craving destruction!

WORLD EXCLUSIVE

STAR WARS™ THE FORCE UNLEASHED

Why this stellar sequel is a
force to be reckoned with!



MULTIPLAYER!

**TRANSFORMERS:
WAR FOR CYBERTRON**
Construct-a-combatant and roll out!



10 THINGS YOU CAN SEE IN VIDEOGAMES THAT DON'T ACTUALLY EXIST (ANYMORE)

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experience may
change online

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FOR A SPIN



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SONY
make.believe

IN FRONT



DEAD RISING 2

Why take on the zombie horde alone when you can do it with a mate, with *boxing gloves full of knives*? Page 58

INSIDER

8 NEWS

All the latest info!

10 SCREENTEST

Plus Separated at Birth and FacePalm!

11 OFF THE CHARTS

Charts make everything simpler

12 TOP TEN

Things you can only see in games!

18 AROUND THE WORLD

What's making headlines?

21 RELEASE SCHEDULE

Plus Aussie charts!

22 OPINION

Sound off!

"We wanted to start players off with a big bang"

HAYDEN BLACKMAN, PRODUCER

42

STAR WARS: THE FORCE UNLEASHED II

Prepare yourself: the Sith has hit the fan.

ON THE COVER

32 TRANSFORMERS

Is this robot riot out of this world?

36 MARVEL VS. CAPCOM 3

First details on the world's hottest upcoming brawler!

48 TRUE CRIME

Another seven flying hours, and we'll be landin' in Hong Kong!

52 F.B.I.R.

Twice the delights, triple the frights!

58 DEAD RISING 2

Two brains are better than one!

REGULARS

8 INSIDER

News, comedy and opinion

28 INBOX

Your letters answered

80 INTERNET

Online reviews, DLC round up

82 INSIGHT

Essential tips & tricks

84 INTERMISSION

Blu-ray, DVD, cinema

90 INDEX

Your ultimate buyer's guide

94 INFAMOUS

Classics unearthed!

96 INSANE

It should be a game!

The cover of PlayStation Magazine (June 2010) features a large image of Darth Vader from Star Wars: The Force Unleashed II. The title "Star Wars: The Force Unleashed II" is prominently displayed in the center. Other news items visible include "UFC 2010", "DEAD RISING 2", "HARD BOILED", "TRANSFORMERS: WAR FOR CYBERTRON", and "F.B.I.R.". The bottom of the cover includes a barcode and the text "10 THINGS YOU CAN SEE IN VIDEOGAMES THAT DON'T ACTUALLY EXIST (ANMORE)".



11 THINGS...

...you must do in *Just Cause 2*. You seriously need to own this game, now. Page 82

REVIEWS



68 UFC UNDISPUTED 2010

Step back into The Octagon and start swinging! First review!



72 LOST PLANET 2

It's not really lost, if you know where it is. Right? We mean, come on!



74 DEAD TO RIGHTS: RETRIBUTION

Man's best friend, or his worst enemy? We're going with the latter. We've seen how he treats testes...



74 SPLIT/SECOND

The best pure arcade racer since *Burnout 3*, or not quite?



76 2010 FIFA WORLD CUP

Barring a miracle, this is the only way Australia is going to win this World Cup. There. We said it.



78 PRISON BREAK: THE CONSPIRACY

Worth picking up soap in the shower for? No. Not quite. Read why.



79 NIER

Does the world need another fantasy RPG so soon after *Final Fantasy XIII*? We're not convinced.



79 GOD OF WAR COLLECTION

A pimped-up package more than worthy of a revisit!



FEATURE 48 TRUE CRIME

26 WIN!

2x PSPs, PLUS COPIES OF PRINCE OF PERSIA: THE FORGOTTEN SANDS!



PREVIEWS

32 TRANSFORMERS: WAR FOR CYBERTRON

36 MARVEL VS. CAPCOM 3: FATE OF TWO WORLDS

38 PRINCE OF PERSIA: THE FORGOTTEN SANDS

40 SPIDER-MAN: SHATTERED DIMENSIONS



Attention all fight fans; prepare to pitch a fit

MARVEL VS. CAPCOM 3

36

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General



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SHOUT OUTS: KJR :: Vinnie :: Nicole :: Luke Mathew :: Lucy :: MJ :: Mackie Manor :: Vispi Bhopti doesn't read these anymore :: E :: Powderfinger :: Stephen Farrelly's folklore



LUKE REILLY

EDITOR

PSN:

Capt_Flashheart



PLAYING:

JUST CAUSE 2



WANTING:

GRAN TURISMO 5

WELCOME!

It would appear plans are afoot for paid demos. "Premium demos", longer than usual but coming at a cost, are apparently being planned by EA. Your purchase of said demo reportedly won't count towards the price of the final game; you'll effectively be paying twice for some content.

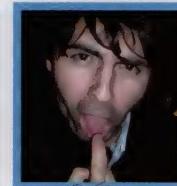
According to Crytek's Cevat Yerli, free game demos are a "luxury" and they're on the way out. He seems deaf to the backlash. Don't blame us for taking it poorly, Yerli. It's the way things have been for over 15 years.

We're not stupid. We know demos cost money to create. But aren't demos, more or less, an interactive advertisement? Isn't it a worthwhile cost? Don't you want people to discover your game is awesome? Who's going to drop \$10-\$15 on random demos, lengthy ones or otherwise? How will gamers discover games they didn't even know they'd love? We're sure it costs money to have old ladies cooking tiny enchilada samples at the supermarket, but at the end of the day you'll likely move a whole lot more enchilada kits than usual.

It's a particularly dangerous move if you're the only one doing it. If EA begins charging for demos but other publishers don't, I imagine EA will sell fewer games. If I went to a car dealership and was told I had to pay to test drive a car I would tell the salesperson where he could shove it and go to a dealership that didn't charge for test-drives.

And when the time for a decision came, am I going to buy the car I've driven, or the one I haven't?

OPS ON: WHAT WE WON'T PAY FOR



STEPHANIE GOH

ART DIRECTOR

Ice cubes. Rubber bands. Sex. I only say this combination of things to see the reaction of my co-workers. I never knew eyebrows went so high.

PSN:

TBA

PLAYING:

God of War Collection

WANTING:

Marvel Vs. Capcom 3

PAUL TAYLOR

DEPUTY EDITOR

A new controller that I almost sent into the skull of a THQ PR rep. I imagine it would've shattered like a carbon fibre egg hitting a brick wall.

PSN:

paulgusta

PLAYING:

ModNation Racers

WANTING:

Marvel Vs. Capcom 3

ADAM MATHEW

ASSOCIATE EDITOR

Bottled water. I would rather drink the sweat from my own socks than pay more than \$2 per litre for something I can get from my tap.

PSN:

yourmumsAWESOME

PLAYING:

Lost Planet 2

WANTING:

Marvel Of Modern Warfare

JAMES COTTEE

CONTRIBUTOR

Like many videogame writers, I won't pay for anything: games, obviously, Dr. Who DVDs, taxis, t-shirts, food and beer. Y'know, the staples.

PSN:

DrWho3987

PLAYING:

UFC 2010

WANTING:

Monster Hunter Freedom 3

JAMES ELLIS

CONTRIBUTOR

High maintenance hottie: diamonds, BMWs, poodles that have hair like Lady Gaga? No chance. Give me a lady with two heads instead.

PSN:

gfaster49

PLAYING:

Super Street Fighter IV

WANTING:

Marvel Vs. Capcom 3





SCANDAL

PUNCHING OUT

Call of Duty studio rocked by a spate of departures

Infinity Ward continues to haemorrhage staff after the sacking of its two most senior employees in March. At the time of going to print the developer of *Modern Warfare 2* – which enjoyed the most successful launch for an entertainment product ever – has now been buffeted by the departure of over a dozen key staff. From a company of around 100 people this is a large number to suddenly leave, particularly when the majority of them were in leadership positions.

Staff who've set sail from the Santa Monica studio include an engineering lead plus two engineers, an art lead, both animation leads plus one other senior animator, and all four design leads. There's been no confirmation so far if any of these developers are heading to new studio Respawn Entertainment (founded by ex-Infinity Ward big wigs Jason West and Vince

Zampella – see below) but we have no doubt we'll see some of these names on the credits for Respawn's first game.

These departures bring the total casualties at Infinity Ward up to at least 13, and it's being reported that sources close to the studio are claiming said that morale at Infinity Ward is low due to a severe lack of leadership.

Activision had been fairly quiet on the situation until Chief Operating and Financial Officer Thomas Tippl spoke with the *LA Times* Company Town blog, saying that the studio "still has nearly 100 people."

WAR OF WORDS

Upon news that Activision was raising its Q1 fiscal outlook based the huge success of its *Modern Warfare 2* DLC, EA's director of corporate communications Jeff Brown told *IndustryGamers*, "This is kind of like announcing: *The race horse I shot last month has won the Triple Crown!*"

"They've built a deep bench, and the change of guard will provide an opportunity for some of the rising stars to put their own stamp on the *Call of Duty* franchise," Tippl claims.

Activision fired West and Zampella on March 1 alleging they had violated their contracts by seeking to start an independent studio and purposefully slowing the production of games. In a lawsuit filed two days later, the duo said Activision had fired them to avoid paying millions of dollars in royalties owed to them. *Modern Warfare 2* has generated an estimated US\$1.3 billion. Activision bought Infinity Ward in 2003 for \$5 million.



RESPAWN ENTERTAINMENT

Ousted Infinity Ward co-founders have formed a new independent company called Respawn Entertainment and are partnering with EA to distribute their first game.

The pair disclosed their plans in an interview with *The Los Angeles Times*.

"This is a total reset," Zampella told *The Times*. "We're starting again from ground zero."

West and Zampella will own and have full control over any intellectual property they create. This is not common in the industry.

"We have learned the hard way," Zampella told *The Times*, "that the best way to ensure the integrity and quality of your work and make sure the fans get what they deserve is to own the intellectual property."

EA has declined to discuss

deal terms, but word is it has the rights to publish Respawn's first game, along with potential sequels and spinoffs.

West and Zampella would not discuss what the first title from Respawn might be and whether it would compete directly with *Call of Duty*, although West did say he expected it to be of "huge, summer blockbuster" scale.

Expect to hear more next year.





16 IN FOCUS
Start your engines and cast your eyes over some sexy screenshots.



18 AROUND THE WORLD IN PS3
We road-trip across far-flung trails odd.



24 ANGRY SACKBOY
Whatever you do, don't make eye contact.



TEAM EXTREME

EA TAKES HEED OF THE NEED

The only thing better than a games publisher who walks the walk is when it drives the drive. EA has formed 'Team Need for Speed': a squad of professional drivers who will be featured in promotional appearances for games in the *NFS* series and will also bring some real racing cred to the videogame. The

talented wheelmen included in the Team Need for Speed are: Vaughn Gittin Jr. (Drift/USA), Matt Powers (Drift/USA), Edward Sandström (GT Racing/Europe), Patrick Söderlund (GT Racing/Europe) and Mad Mike Whiddett (Drift/USA, New Zealand, Japan). Meanwhile, we sit here patiently salivating for Criterion's take on the *NFS* brand.



FORECAST: A 90% CHANCE OF...

TROUBLE A-BREWIN'

Epic Games' Cliff Bleszinski has announced a new title called *Bulletstorm*. It's to be a collaboration between Epic and *Painkiller* developer People Can Fly and, judging from its title, probably isn't a sports game. It is, in fact, a shooter that favours creative slaughtering and combo meters over routine marksmanship.

It stars an under-exploited type of lead character: the washed-up, broken-down, alcoholic variety of space marine with a mouth as smart as his trigger-finger is itchy. The art style looks gorgeous and we're hanging out for some hands-on time.

Stay tuned.

IN SHORT...

Keith 'Guru' Elam, hip-hop superstar and the man behind the voice of *GTA IV*'s demolitions expert 8-Ball, died Monday - April 19 after a battle with cancer. 8-Ball also appears in *GTA: Liberty City Stories*.



Ubisoft has announced it's going 'green' and will no longer include paper manuals with new PS3 games. Sounds a bit like a cost saving exercise to us, but we haven't read a manual in years.



For the first time ever, Rockstar is implementing a difficulty setting within its next open-world extravaganza, *Red Dead Redemption*. Casual mode will have regenerating health and auto-aim.



WHAT'S HOT OR NOT

Too hot to handle? Or too cold to hold?



Marvel vs. Capcom 3

You should see this thing in motion



Poolside 'networking'

By networking, we actually mean drinking lush cocktails



Hybrid food

Take one part Mexico, one part Jamaica. Mix, enjoy



Respawn

More great games incoming, we think. Pity about the...



Legal mumbo jumbo

...way it came into being



Volcanoes

Iceland, you've just scuppered one of our junkets



GT5

And now, it's just getting beyond a joke

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FACEPALM!

Status updates from the digital elite



Old Snake needs a new Octocamo suit... it's a little tight around the waist.

Today 3:46pm • Comment • Like



Otacon Snake... You're getting lazy with the Mk. III again aren't you? How many times have I told you, the range isn't even that good. Do your own snooping and stop being lazy or you WILL get fat... Fat Old Snake.

2 hours ago • Report



Raiden @Otacon. ROFL. Finally, people will finally get off my back and stop poking fun at my metrosexuality.

2 hours ago • Report



Old Snake hahaha you said poking. You must enjoy that then.

2 hours ago • Report



Raiden ...I'm seriously so sick and tired of people making fun of me. Just because I have long, flowing, perfectly shaped hair that's beautifully shampooed 3 times every night, a super slick suit and a sword DOES NOT MEAN, that I enjoy poking Snake.

2 hours ago • Report



Old snake Poking Snake? OMG you didn't just say that did you????

2 hours ago • Report



Otacon Fail XD

2 hours ago • Report



Raiden WTF? This isn't about me. It's about a Fat Old Snake. Out of his prime.

2 hours ago • Report



Old snake Bite me Raiden.

2 hours ago • Report



Raiden Hey Snake. Did you ever tell Otacon that you used to skip through all his conversations - All of your "long talks" that you used to have? Oooo someone's going to erupt big time - Iceland style.

2 hours ago • Report



Otacon Ooh. Ouch. That wasn't very nice... see what I did there? haha

2 hours ago • Report



Old snake Icy what you did there hahaha. I listened to every word and I never once skipped!

2 hours ago • Report



Laughing Octopus This is all so #\$%ing hysterical!

2 hours ago • Report



Laughing Octopus What?

1 minute ago • Report

SCREENTEST
Your favourite games as movies

GOD OF WAR

War and pieces



The Director

John McTierman

The Plot...

Following the storyline of *God Of War*, the plot tells the story of Kratos seeking his revenge against the god of war, Ares. Starting with the explosive opening scene of the Hydra, Kratos is sent on a mission from Athena, to destroy Ares and save Athens. In return, he will be relieved of his memories of him accidentally killing his wife and child because Ares tricked him into doing so. He then needs to find Pandora's box, which so happens to be in the Temple of Pandora, on the back of the Titan, Cronos, punished by the gods for eating Zeus' little brothers and sisters (phew!). Then using the power of Pandora's box, he is to defeat Ares.

The Pitch

Take all your Greek creatures of mythology, typical action humour, some well placed puns and explosions, then throw them all into the blender that is Kratos.

Green Light or Development Hell?

By the gods! A green light for sure. This would be a definite 3D movie. Just imagine Kratos performing some emergency eye surgery on a hapless Cyclops or ripping the arms off un-dead soldiers and using said arms to wreak further havoc. There would A LOT of computer-generated images – and we mean A LOT – but it worked for *Avatar* and that didn't do too badly. The Hydra battle would look incredible as an opening. Not to mention running through the Desert of Lost Souls and snapping the necks of sirens, all the assorted killer traps in Pandora's temple and top it off, the Giant Demon Minotaur and the final fight with Ares – hell, even the underworld (pun not intended) would be an utterly incredible setting. The story is decent

to match. Predictable, but decent. Expect lots of one-liners, all screamed of course, to help express the rage of Kratos. This could actually make for a decent flick.

Best Line:

Kratos: "Mangy beasts! I shall send you back to the depths of Hades!"

The Cast:

Bruce Willis as the angry, angry, Kratos hell bent on death and destruction. Also, bald.



Angelina Jolie as Athena. She's a cougar and Athena needs to be a cougar.



Mel Gibson as the all-powerful Zeus, with a large beard.



Danny Glover as Poseidon, reunited with Mel. Plus, he's black. Edgy casting.



Arnold Schwarzenegger as Ares. Sure it's a little clichéd, but a fight scene with him and Bruce would be epic.



"Mangy beasts! I shall send you back to the depths of Hades!"

KRATOS

NUMBER CRUNCHING

33

Percentage of gamers who plan on purchasing *Gran Turismo 5* but don't yet own a PlayStation 3, according to marketing research agency OTX GamePlan. That equals a lot of PS3s.

SEPARATED AT BIRTH!



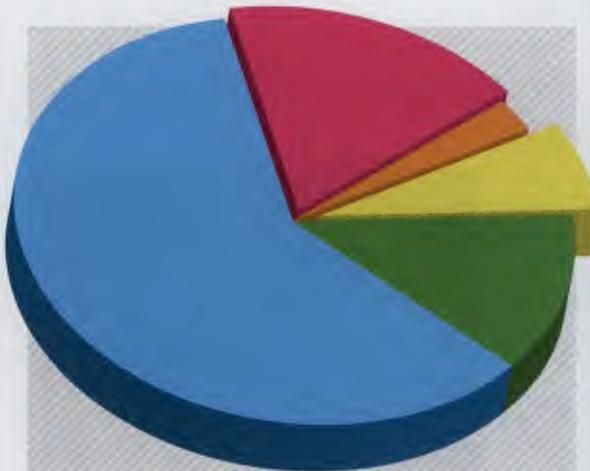
NO. 16 Owen Wilson and *Street Fighter*'s blondest brawler, Ken Masters

He doesn't quite have the guns. Or the eyebrows. Or the fireballs. But Owen Wilson does have the tussled blonde locks and shiny white teeth of Ken Masters. We can't really imagine the lackadaisical Wilson wailing on anyone, but we can picture him in a torn-up fight outfit crafted from the remains of an orange quilt cover. Plus, with the amount of times Ken has been punched in the face we imagine he'd have a busted nose as well.



THE OPS CHARTS

Everything makes more sense in chart form. Especially pie charts. They're deliciously informative!



TIMES WHEN YOU'LL DROP THE F-BOMB WHILE PLAYING JUST CAUSE 2

Love it – or be sissy enough as to never say it and miss out on one of life's sweetest words – the f-bomb sure does comes in handy during videogames.

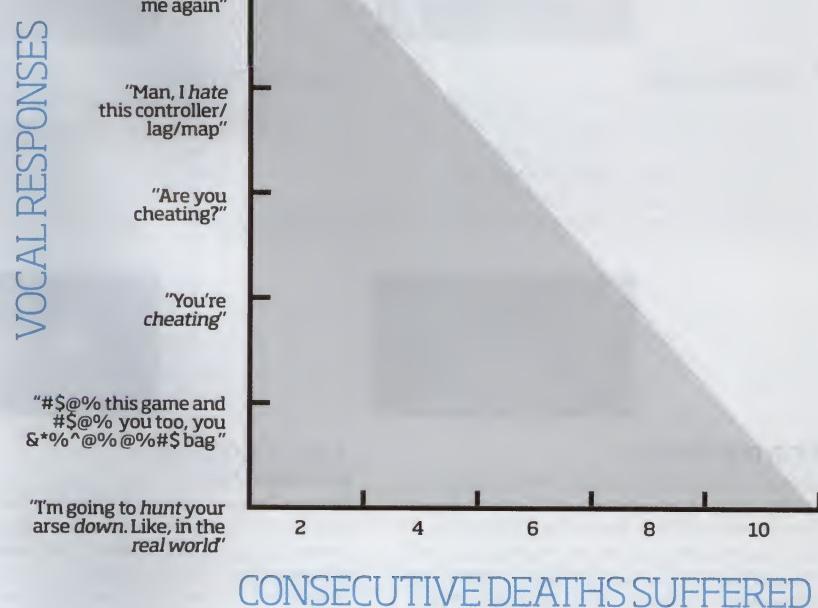
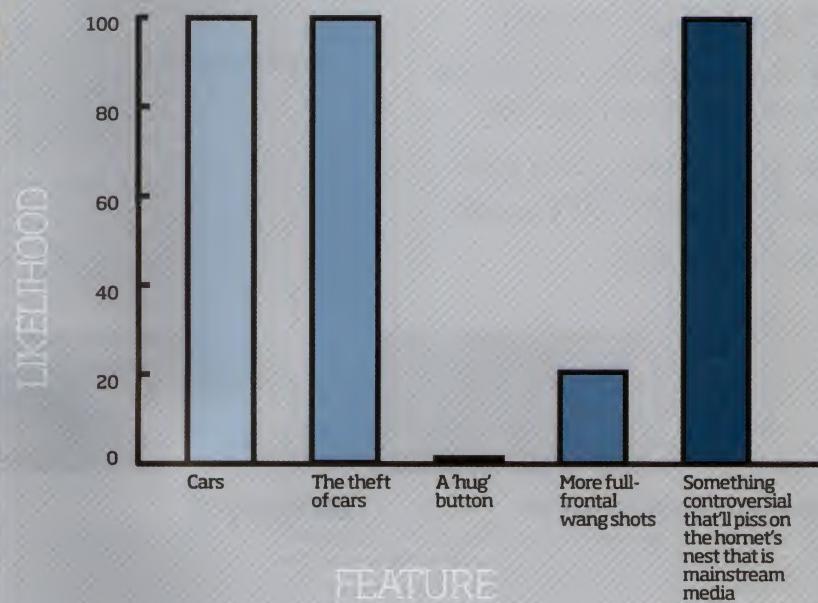
- During your first Stripper Zeppelin visit
- As you screw up a bridge 'fly under' stunt by a pubic hair's margin
- When describing the voice acting. Just before the sound '-ing atrocious' leaves your mouth
- When the ninjas show up
- After you look for the 'start co-op multiplayer' option

THE DETERIORATION OF MULTIPLAYER SPORTSMANSHIP IN RELATION TO CONSECUTIVE DEATHS

Everybody has their limit, and that limit is regularly crossed (and sometimes spat upon) when playing online multiplayer with complete strangers.

THINGS MOST LIKELY TO FEATURE IN GTA V

Nothing has been announced about GTA V. But we know that it's utterly unknown release date is creeping ever closer. Sort of like the wife's birthday. Whenever that is.



TOP 10

THINGS YOU CAN SEE IN GAMES THAT DON'T EXIST (ANYMORE)

Nothing lasts forever. Time, or the hand of man, will see to that. We've dug up 10 things that, beyond pictures and film, you can now only interact with inside videogames.

1

DEAD PEOPLE

The amount of ex-persons starring in videogames is huge. Jimi Hendrix, Johnny Cash, Kurt Cobain and 50 per cent of The Beatles (the dead ones) are available to jam with. The amount of wrestlers who have been administered an eternal sleeper hold by death, but live on in games, is quite boggling. Then there's Colin McRae and Richard Burns. You can even see the king of cool, Steve McQueen, in his very own videogame – and he's been dead since 1980.



2

**WORLD TRADE CENTER**

The World Trade Center was built in the early '70s, so with the opening half of *Driver: Parallel Lines* set in 1978 New York it stands to reason an intact World Trade Center would feature – and it does. It's a little eerie to stay up at them in the game, but it's certainly better than looking at the hole where they used to be.

3

ORAN PARK

48 years of motorsport heritage came to end when Oran Park Raceway was demolished to make way for over 5000 homes. They're planning on keeping the main straight, but the rest is kaput. If you want to race Oran Park anymore you're going to need to do it in a V8 Supercars game on PS2.



4

DINOSAURS

30 per cent of Texans agree with the statement, "Humans and dinosaurs lived at the same time." Another 30 per cent said they weren't sure. We don't know whether to blame the Bible or *The Flintstones*. 65-million years apart, the only way humans and dinosaurs will ever mix is through videogames like *Turok*.



5

**EINDHOVEN**

You can see the way the Dutch city of Eindhoven used to look by booting up *Brothers in Arms: Hell's Highway*. It doesn't look like that anymore because large-scale bombing in WWII destroyed most of the city. That's what makes Gearbox's snapshot of a place that no longer exists so interesting.

6

MAZDA FURAI

This one-of-a-kind concept car debuted at the 2008 Detroit Motor Show, and has reared its unique head in a few racing games since – most recently in the last batch of DLC for *Race Driver GRID*. However, the reliable word is that the Furai has been dismantled. That means Hell hath no Furai, and neither do we.



7

OLD LOS ANGELES

One of the more interesting bits of trivia we know about Sydney-developed *L.A. Noire* is that the dedication to period authenticity will mean you'll be able to drive down streets of 1940s LA that literally no longer exist. If Humphrey Bogart was alive he'd totally shed a quiet tear... if Humphrey Bogart could cry.



8

**HORTEN HO 229**

Blazing Angels II features a host of crazy prototype aircraft, including the German Ho 229. It was the first turbojet-powered flying wing and was the first aircraft with stealth technology. The National Air and Space Museum has some pieces of one, but everything else was destroyed. The world didn't need stealth Nazis.

9

THE COLOSSUS OF RHODES

Granted, the real Colossus of Rhodes probably never came to life, but PlayStation is the only place you'll see it now. *God of War II*: 1, real-life: 0. Apparently Rhodes is planning to rebuild the Colossus in the hope it'll boost tourism and retrospectively ruin this month's top 10.



10

VAN HALEN'S CAREER

Guitar Hero: Van Halen does a reasonable job of emulating Van Halen at the height of its popularity, even though it tosses Wolfgang Van Halen in a time machine and removes bassist of 31 years Michael Anthony from the history books. Thing is, Van Halen is no longer at the height of its popularity. And they have short hair now.



SMOKING MARIJUANA WASTES RELATIONSHIPS

Using marijuana wastes relationships, time, money, and jobs. And psychological problems, sometimes major and long term, are just one possibility. Is it really worth it?

For help or information, call 1800 250 015
or visit australia.gov.au/drugs

MARIJUANA. WHAT A WASTE.



INFOCUS

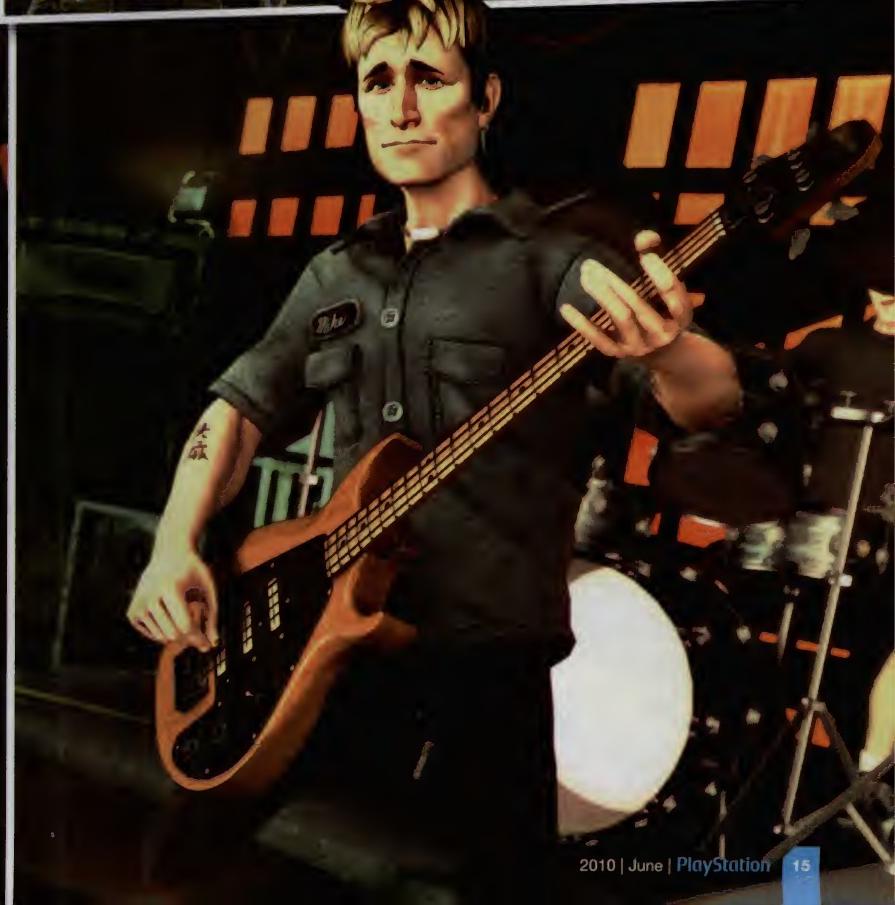
GREEN DAY: ROCK BAND

Over 20 years of rocking has resulted in Green Day getting their own game. 47 tracks, all the way back to *Dookie*, and all fully exportable. Nice.



Nice shirt, stupid





INFOCUS

SUPERSTARS V8: NEXT CHALLENGE

In the absence of a proper V8 Supercars game, this is about as close as we'll get to proper touring car racing – for now. This second effort is a huge improvement.



Doorhandle-to-doorhandle: the way Codemasters used to make 'em



This game is made in Italy. Like Ferrari. Or pizza





It's not pictured, but the HSV Clubsport R8 features – albeit badge-engineered as a Chevrolet Lumina CR8



V8 Superstars, huh? Sounds... familiar



AROUND THE WORLD IN PS3

OPS trawls high and low for what's going on around the globe in gaming



INTERNATIONAL CHARTS



UK
Source: ELSPA

- 1 Battlefield: Bad Company 2 EA
- 2 Just Cause 2 Square Enix
- 3 God of War III Sony
- 4 Modern Warfare 2 Activision
- 5 FIFA 10 EA
- 6 Heavy Rain Sony
- 7 Assassin's Creed II Ubisoft
- 8 Aliens vs Predator Sega
- 9 Final Fantasy XIII Square Enix
- 10 Sonic & Sega All-Stars Racing Sega



JAPAN
Source: VGCHARTZ

- 1 Hokuto Musou Koei
- 2 Pro Yakyuu Spirits 2010 Konami
- 3 Ryu Ga Gotoku 4 Sega
- 4 God of War III Sony
- 5 Winning Post World 2010 Koei
- 6 God of War Collection Sony
- 7 BioHazard 5 Capcom
- 8 Nobunaga no Yabou: Tendou Koei
- 9 Battlefield: Bad Company 2 EA
- 10 Demon's Souls Sony



USA
Source: NPD

- 1 God of War III Sony
- 2 Assassin's Creed II Ubisoft
- 3 Modern Warfare 2 Activision
- 4 Call of Duty: World at War Activision
- 5 Final Fantasy XIII Square Enix
- 6 Battlefield: Bad Company 2 EA
- 7 LittleBigPlanet Sony
- 8 God of War Collection Sony
- 9 Call of Duty 4: Modern Warfare Activision
- 10 Heavy Rain Sony

PRE-ORDER PARADISE

The hottest deals, the coolest stuff - what are you waiting for?



UFC UNDISPUTED 2010

UFC Undisputed 2010 is the only mixed martial arts (MMA) videogame that delivers the action, intensity and prestige of the Ultimate Fighting Championship (UFC). Step into the Octagon to experience the most advanced and commanding virtual MMA action with more than 100 of the best UFC fighters in the world. Experience intelligent and intuitive combat, increased fighter customisation, robust career progression, challenging new gameplay modes and explosive online offerings.

JB HIFI

Price: \$109

Estimated Dispatch Date: 27 May 2010

EB GAMES

Price: \$108

Estimated Dispatch Date: 27 May 2010

Special Offer:

EB Games is offering an exclusive bonus *UFC Undisputed 2010* four character unlock with their pre-orders. JB HiFi will give a commemorative tin case and UFC 110 DVD (pictured).



SKATE 3



Everyone can throw down in *SKATE 3*. New fans of the series can learn the ins and outs of skateboarding with the all-new skate school - letting players practice the skills before hitting the streets with their team. *SKATE 3* delivers all the competition and camaraderie of skateboarding. With a set list of new tricks, improved board actions and exciting new team-based gameplay, skateboarding has been taken to a new level of fun.

JB HIFI

Price: \$89

Estimated Dispatch Date: 14 May 2010

GAME

Price: \$79

Estimated Dispatch Date: 13 May 2010

Special JB HIFI and EB GAMES offer:

Pre-order to receive a download card to access the Black Box District Skate Park.



RED DEAD REDEMPTION

Red Dead Redemption features an open-world environment for players to explore, including frontier towns, rolling prairies teaming with wildlife, and perilous mountain passes. Along the way, players will experience the heat of gunfights and battles, meet a host of unique characters, struggle against the harshness of one of the world's last remaining wildernesses, and ultimately pick their own precarious path through an epic story about the death of the Wild West and the gunslingers that inhabited it.

EB GAMES

Price: \$118

Estimated Dispatch Date: 21 May 2010

Special Offer:

Red Dead Redemption Limited Edition contains:

- * Soundtrack
- * Extra DLC via PSN including:
 - Deadly Assassin Outfit
 - War Horse
 - Golden Guns Weapon Pack

Exclusive EB Games Pre-order Bonus includes:

- * Brady Games miniguide



PRINCE OF PERSIA: THE FORGOTTEN SANDS

Visiting his brother's kingdom after his battles in Azad, and before Prince of Persia: Warrior Within, the Prince finds the royal palace under siege from a mighty army bent on its destruction. However the decision is made to use the ancient power of the Sands as a desperate gamble to save the kingdom from total annihilation. The Prince will embark on a new quest where he will learn true leadership and discover that with great power often comes a greater cost. The classic gameplay has been invented from multi-enemy combat to feats of acrobatic prowess. Wielding nature and time, the Prince will have an unparalleled advantage over his enemies.

GAME

Price: \$89

Estimated Dispatch Date: 20 May 2010

JB HIFI

Price: \$99

Estimated Dispatch Date: 20 May 2010

Special Offers:

Pre-order with GAME to receive an exclusive unlock to play as Sand Wraith from the Warrior Within. JB HiFi is offering the Prince Malik's Armor skin with its pre-order.





MAY 13 SUPERSTARS V8: NEXT CHALLENGE

This is your chance to take on some thoroughbred V8 beasts based on the Italian Superstars Championship in this high-octane racer. 19 opponents, 11 tracks, real-life locations: there's a heart pumping challenge waiting.

THIS MONTH

Your 30-day planner of games and goodness!



MAY
20

PRINCE OF PERSIA: THE FORGOTTEN SANDS

A movie and a game released in the same month? That's fine with us. Set between *The Sands of Time* and *Warrior Within*, the Prince goes to visit his brother in a nearby kingdom to find it being overrun by a brutal army, only the sands are released to help fight them off. Fans of the series should definitely check this out.



MAY
20

SBK X SUPERBIKE WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP

Take those Paddle-Pop sticks out from your spokes and get to grips with this sim on your PS3. *SBK X*'s authenticity is undeniable, from the fully-licensed riders and teams to bikes and tracks set across four different championships. Plus, there's online play for up to 16 racers. Get on and hold tight!



MAY 26

STATE OF ORIGIN

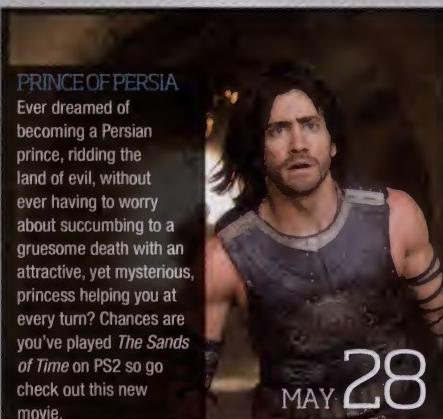
It's that time of year again where the best of the best come to settle the differences on the field. Will NSW overcome the dominance of a killer-winning streak held by Queensland or will it leave the Blues maroon-faced again?



MAY 27

UFC UNDISPUTED 2010

So you want to be the undisputed champion of 2010? *UFC: Undisputed 2010* is shaping up to be action-packed, as it puts you back into the octagon of brutality where you've got to outsmart your opponent in a match where one blow can take you straight to victory.



MAY 28

PRINCE OF PERSIA

Ever dreamed of becoming a Persian prince, ridding the land of evil, without ever having to worry about succumbing to a gruesome death with an attractive, yet mysterious, princess helping you at every turn? Chances are you've played *The Sands of Time* on PS2 so go check out this new movie.



JUNE
2-14

SYDNEY FILM FESTIVAL

It's the 57th Sydney Film Festival, and whether you only rock up to the movies on a Tuesday night or fancy yourself as the next David Stratton, this festival is a great time to experience some of the world's best short films from over 40 countries. Unleash your inner critic!



JUNE 8

SHUTTER ISLAND

From the genius that is Martin Scorsese, his latest thriller will hit the shelves on Blu-ray and DVD. Be prepared for 5.1 DTS HD Master Audio (er, heaps good sound) with the beautiful visuals that 1080p has to offer. Buy it from billybluray.com.au/!



JUNE 11

THE A-TEAM

Following the daring exploits of Hannibal Smith and the team of former Special Forces soldiers who were set up for a crime they didn't commit. So now, they're going to clear their names and, with some well-placed explosions and their list of crazy talents, they set out to find the real culprit.



JUNE 11-JULY 11

2010 FIFA WORLD CUP

With the aliens gone from *District 9*, it's time to get you're boots on and whatever else you like to wear, or not wear (we don't judge), and immerse yourself in the World Cup. Go Australia!

RELEASE SCHEDULE

Coming soon to a store near you...

OUT NOW

Grand Theft Auto: Episodes from Liberty City
Genre: Action
Distributor: Rockstar

Super Street Fighter IV
Genre: Fighting
Distributor: THQ

FIFA World Cup 2010
Genre: Sports
Distributor: EA

God of War Collection
Genre: Adventure
Distributor: Sony

Just Cause 2
Genre: Action
Distributor: Namco Bandai Partners

MAY

Red Dead Redemption
Genre: Action
Distributor: Rockstar

Lost Planet 2
Genre: Action
Distributor: THQ

Skate 3
Genre: Sports
Distributor: EA

ModNation Racers
Genre: Racing
Distributor: Sony

Blur
Genre: Racing
Distributor: Activision

Prince of Persia: The Forgotten Sands
Genre: Action
Distributor: Ubisoft

Split/Second
Genre: Racing
Distributor: THQ

UFC Undisputed 2010
Genre: Sports
Distributor: THQ

Backbreaker
Genre: Sports
Distributor: AIE

3D Dot Game Heroes
Genre: Adventure
Distributor: Namco Bandai Partners

Alpha Protocol
Genre: Action RPG
Distributor: Sega

JUNE

LEGO Harry Potter
Genre: Family
Distributor: Warner Bros.

R.U.S.E.
Genre: RTS
Distributor: Ubisoft

Naughty Bear
Genre: Action
Distributor: AIE

Tiger Woods PGA Tour 11
Genre: Sports
Distributor: EA

Singularity
Genre: Shooter
Distributor: Activision

Green Day: Rock Band
Genre: Music
Distributor: EA

JULY

Clash of the Titans
Genre: Action
Distributor: Namco Bandai Partners

AUGUST

Kane & Lynch 2: Dog Days
Genre: Action
Distributor: Namco Bandai Partners

Mafia II
Genre: Action
Distributor: 2K

Dead Rising 2
Genre: Action
Distributor: THQ

Formula 1 2010
Genre: Racing
Distributor: Namco Bandai Partners

Castlevania: Lords of Shadow
Genre: Action
Distributor: Mindscape

SEPTEMBER

AFL 10
Genre: Sports
Distributor: Sony

Agent
Genre: Action
Distributor: Rockstar

Brink
Genre: Shooter
Distributor: Bethesda

Fallout: New Vegas
Genre: RPG
Distributor: Namco Bandai Partners

Ghost Recon: Future Soldier
Genre: Action
Distributor: Ubisoft

WRC
Genre: Racing
Distributor: AFA

L.A. Noire
Genre: Adventure
Distributor: Rockstar

Majin and the Forsaken Kingdom
Genre: Adventure
Distributor: Namco Bandai Partners

Gran Turismo 5
Genre: Racing
Distributor: Sony

Medal of Honor
Genre: Shooter
Distributor: EA

The Last Guardian
Genre: Adventure
Distributor: Sony

Max Payne 3
Genre: Action
Distributor: Rockstar

Spec Ops: The Line
Genre: Action
Distributor: 2K

Test Drive Unlimited 2
Genre: Racing
Distributor: Namco Bandai Partners

True Crime
Genre: Action
Distributor: Activision

Spec Ops: The Line
Genre: Action
Distributor: 2K

Star Wars: The Force Unleashed II
Genre: Action
Distributor: Activision

Homefront
Genre: Shooter
Distributor: THQ

Rock Band 3
Genre: Music
Distributor: EA

EA Sports MMA
Genre: Sports
Distributor: EA

Pure Football
Genre: Sports
Distributor: Ubisoft

Metal Gear Solid: Rising
Genre: Action
Distributor: Mindscape

QUOTE UNQUOTE

Industry chatter, inside tips and loose lips



"We don't have the time to comment on the many lawsuits Activision files against its employees and creative partners."



"In the near future, we'll have games that don't depend on any platform."



"I'm not directly blaming games, I'm blaming parents. If someone doesn't do something where does it stop?"



"They need to quit playing videogames, throw away their Auto-Tune program and cut three strings off their guitar."

EA spokesperson Jeff Brown on the Infinity Ward debacle. Burn!

MGS big boss Hideo Kojima on a console-free future.
"It's a bold prediction," SCE Japan President Hiroshi Kawano responded.

A spokesperson for Mothers Against Violence during a debate on BBC Radio Leeds.

AUSSIE CHARTS



1 **God of War III**
Genre: Adventure Distributor: Sony



2 **Battlefield: Bad Company 2**
Genre: Shooter Distributor: EA



3 **Just Cause 2**
Genre: Action Distributor: NBP



4 **Final Fantasy XIII**
Genre: RPG Distributor: Ubisoft



5 **Modern Warfare 2**
Genre: Shooter Distributor: Activision



6 **FIFA 10**
Genre: Sports Distributor: EA



7 **Heavy Rain**
Genre: Adventure Distributor: Sony



8 **Assassin's Creed II**
Genre: Action Distributor: Ubisoft



9 **Aliens vs Predator**
Genre: Shooter Distributor: Sega



10 **Batman: Arkham Asylum**
Genre: Action Distributor: NBP



OPINION

TEMPER TRAP

THQ's PR men, who we'll call Hot Lips and Oxford for the purposes of this piece, were in the office to show and leave us with *Super Street Fighter IV*. Rather than picking someone new out of the revised line-up to see how the game had changed, myself and Oxford were straight into competition mode. It seemed a bit obvious to be Ryu or Ken to take on his Blanka, so Sakura was close enough. It had been a long couple of weeks due to Luke being away, and Adam working on content before a press junket. I was taking on most of Luke's responsibilities, as well as doing whatever it is I do, so actually playing a game to blow off steam was going to be awesome. Sakura was the key to good times. The key. *Good times.*

Cue forward roughly two minutes after the game had loaded and I was back at my desk. I can't remember if I swore first or threw the controller onto the couch, embedding it between the cushions. Blanka was halfway through his Electric Thunder for the thirtieth time in two rounds. Sakura was in the middle of ANOTHER spasm. It probably wouldn't have been so bad if there hadn't been an audience. And I hadn't been beaten by a total chump (not that I still care or anything, Punk-xford).

The silence was heavy and immediate after the controller went Mach 5 into the fabric. I couldn't sweep kick through the Thunder (WHY?) and I couldn't time a heavy kick to land just as he finished because Oxford was SMASHING the light punch button like the drummer from Def Leppard.

Right then, at that moment as I was

fuming, *Super Street Fighter IV* was the worst game ever made, as it was incomprehensibly and utterly broken.

We talked about it afterwards.

"I was using official moves," said Oxford.

What, spamming the punch button?

"Yeah, that's one of Blanka's key moves."

What was your reaction to the controller rocketing into the couch?

"I was a bit surprised because I hadn't consciously entered douche bag mode. That's how I play *Streeties* because I'm shit at it."

You were about to win – by cheating – and I thought 'no, I can't allow this.'

"You said something like 'I'm walking away, you're a cheap effing cheater', and then after you left I just light punched you to death."

I normally don't care that much when I lose, especially when it's a trivial knock-about, and at least the DualShock landed on something soft. Luke once threw a pad into the ground and shattered it when a console he was playing died in the middle of *Skate 2*. Adam Mathew once tried to bite his controller in half when playing *World at War* on Veteran. One of our freelancers, who we'll call Akon, once spat on his PSP when playing *Monster Hunter* as something large kept eating him.

Mine, however, was worse, as it was against someone rather than just the CPU. It was a petty and churlish moment. But it felt good. That's got to count for something, right? Right?

Paul Taylor isn't usually a sore loser, and actually likes *Street Fighter*. Just don't pick Blanka if you see him in an arcade or online.

"The silence was heavy and immediate after the controller went Mach 5 into the fabric"



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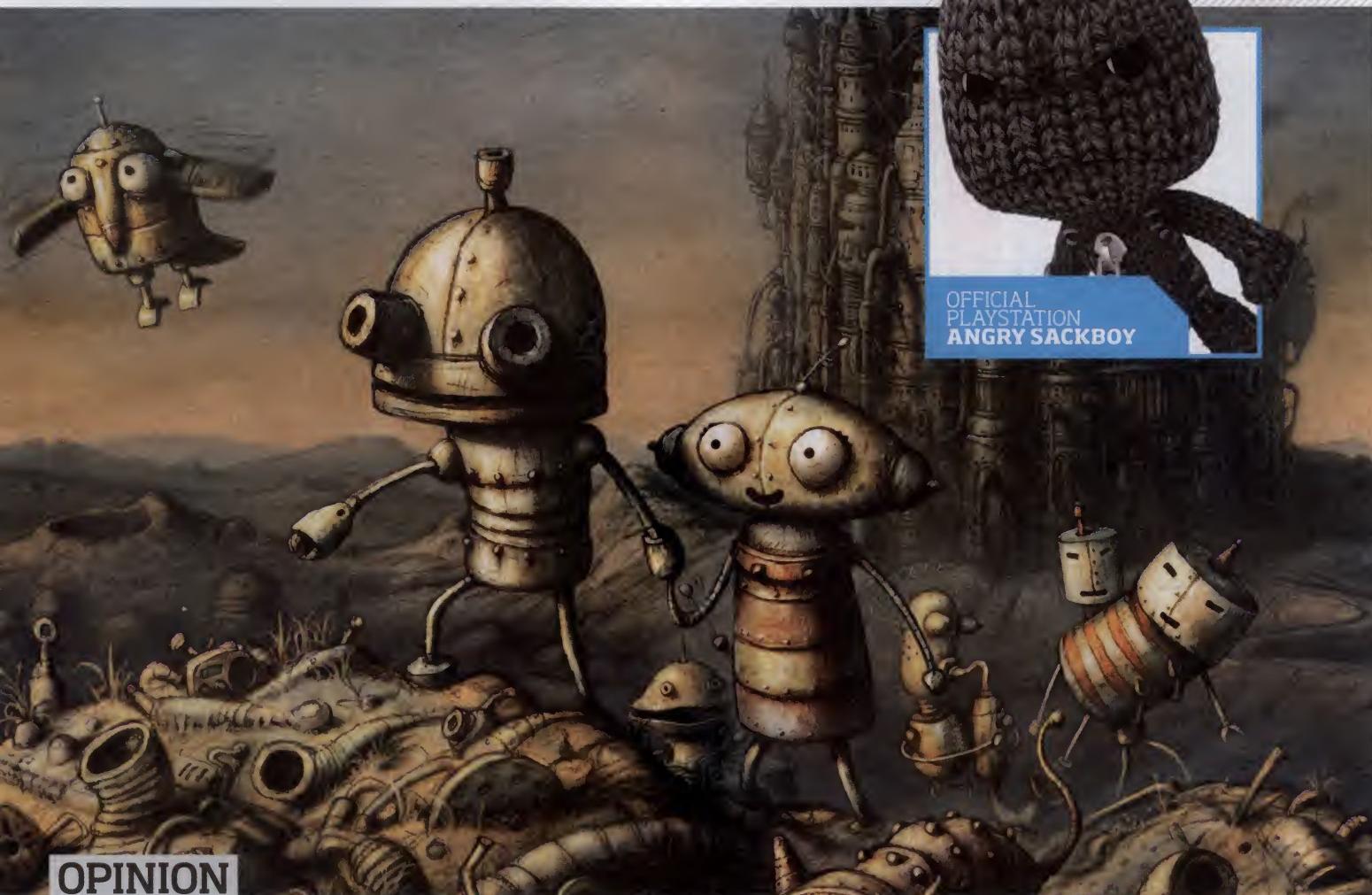
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OPINION

MACHINE MEN

You may not have heard of *Machinarium*. It's a quirky little game from the Czech Republic, and looks like one of those cartoons that wins the Oscar for 'Animated Feature Most Likely To Give Children Nightmares'. The game's been a modest success on PC, and its developer wanted to release it on the Xbox Live Arcade. After making first contact, Microsoft dicked them around for six months, and then turned them down. Why? Because it would not have been 'exclusive' to XBLA. Amanita Design had dared, dared to release *Machinarium* on two other formats: Linux and Mac. Microsoft didn't want to be seen promoting a game that could be played on a rival system... or, at least, that's what they claimed. Sometimes I wonder if Microsoft just enjoys screwing over the indies.

I mean, consider what they did to that

lovable loon, Jeff Minter. To read his LiveJournal posts during the XBLA approval process for *Space Giraffe*, you'd think he was having a nervous breakdown. His game had nothing but geometric shapes and fireworks in it, but he had to spend months filling out forms, and proving beyond reasonable doubt that those geometric shapes were in no way racist, sexist, or offensive to anyone. If his brain wasn't broken before he got *Space Giraffe* approved, it was definitely broken afterwards.

He's given up on XBLA, now, and is concentrating his efforts on the iPhone. Amanita Design, too, promptly turned around and started negotiations with PSN once Microsoft gave them the flick.

The indie developer Introversion has also been stung. Their efforts to bring *Darwinia* to XBLA suffered over a year of delays, as Microsoft demanded change after change. The lads at this pommy developer are far too classy to publicly badmouth Microsoft, but actions speak louder than words. Their next release will be a console port of the brilliant *DEFCON*, and it's not coming to XBLA — it's coming to PSN.

Notice a pattern here?

“The indies keep things interesting. The indies keep gaming alive”

Microsoft loves to boast about how easy it is to develop for their console. Yet every indie I've ever talked to has told me that the XBLA approval process takes a full one third of a game's development time.

It's just sad that Microsoft is making life so difficult for the world's best independent developers. These are dudes who have put everything, EVERYTHING on the line to follow their dreams. When you're not on a salary, a six-month delay to your game can mean hardship. A year-long delay can mean ruin. And gamers miss out, too. For it's only the indies who have the vision to try out radical new ideas. EA could never have thought of *Doodle Jump*. Activision would never publish *Rift*. *Everyday Shooter*. The indies keep things interesting. The indies keep gaming alive.

It makes you wonder what's going on at Microsoft High Command, and what kind of pencil-pusher would get off on strangling gaming innovation. For needless rules are tyranny. And tyrants never last...

Angry Sackboy is an ex-video game journalist and is all about PSN.

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Prince of Persia

THE FORGOTTEN SANDS



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COMPETITIONS

WIN! WIN! WIN!

WIN!

TRUE GRIT

Thanks to Ubisoft we have two *Prince of Persia: The Forgotten Sands* packs on PSP to give away valued at \$278 each, plus five copies of the game on PSP, valued at \$59.95 each, as runner-up prizes! Both packs contain a metallic silver console and a copy of the game, where you take control of the Prince in a brand-new adventure set between the events of the esteemed *The Sands Of Time* and *The Warrior Within*. Blessed with a roster of time- and environment-bending powers, you're set for a royally good time, and on PSP you have your whole world in your hands. For your chance to win, simply answer this question and follow the entry instructions below.

Question: In 25 words or less, where's the worst place you can find sand and why?



HOW TO ENTER

To enter Official PlayStation Magazine competitions email your entries to ops@themediafactory.com.au with the name of the competition ONLY in the subject line. Email entries are entitled to one entry (multiple entries will be deleted!). Alternatively, send clearly marked postal entries to **OPS competitions PO BOX 1037, Bondi Junction 1355**. Please include your name, age and address with your answer on the back of an envelope. Chance plays no part in determining winners. Competitions close 22/06/2010. Winners will be notified by mail.



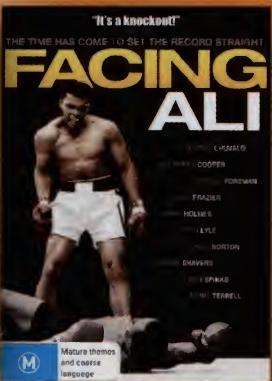
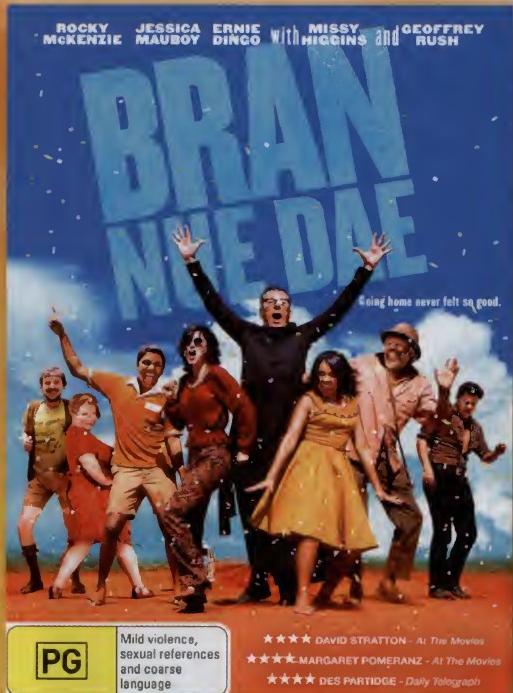
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PG Parental guidance recommended M Recommended for mature audiences MA15+ Not suitable for people under 15. Under 15s must be accompanied by a parent or guardian



THUMBS UP

Great magazine. I'm a long-time gamer, but first time writer.

My stepson and I have recently completed *Marvel: Ultimate Alliance 2* together. It's the latest in a slowly growing list of games we've enjoyed together. I know that to many folk this would not be too great of an achievement, let alone a reason to write in to a magazine and tell everyone about it. But let me explain.

My stepson, Daniel, is 19 and was born with Down syndrome. His ability to comprehend even the simplest of messages can, at times, be very difficult. However, video games have not only been a great way for the two of us to bond, but have provided Dan with the desire to better his reading ability (through on-screen messages, rulebooks and magazines like OPS), increased his problem solving skills (he's currently playing through *Batman: Arkham Asylum*), and helped to teach self-control, patience and the ability to ask questions (all three being required when he hits a tough patch in a game). While some people are complaining about how video games are bad for our kids, I'd like to send a big thank you to all the companies and game designers who have helped enhance both my and my stepson's life. Even the games that do not rate highly often provide us with a lot of fun and enjoyment, while secretly teaching us. So I'm firmly of the belief that video games can be very beneficial to helping our kids learn. Perhaps all that is required is for more parents to become involved in what their kids are doing and what games they are playing. As a step-parent and a gamer, I make the decision as to what games Dan is allowed to play, and whether he can play them by himself, or only when I'm with



him. This way he can still enjoy the games, but those with deeper moral issues can be avoided or dealt with together as a family. For example: the ruckus over the colour of the zombies in *Resident Evil 5*. Dan has an understanding of discrimination, be it racial or otherwise, and is at the age where he is questioning his feelings in many matters, but even he was able to figure out that *Resident Evil 5* was just a game. Nothing more. The zombies were just something fun to kill. Now I know the term 'fun to kill' sounds bad, but we are talking about a video game, and not real life. And that is perhaps the most important lesson that Dan has learned while gaming: it's not real life. Real life can be a whole lot harder and more complicated,

especially for someone with an intellectual disability. But at least for a while he can be Batman, or Wolverine, or some other cool guy taking out all the bad guys and saving the day.

Games have always been a big part of my life and it's wonderful that I'm now able to pass on my love of gaming to Dan. And in return, Dan is showing me a whole new way to enjoy games. Sometimes the only rating a game needs is how much fun it can be.

David Schuhkraft, QLD

Thanks for your letter David. It's great to get letters that show the world the positive side of gaming – and there's no way anyone could argue with you.



**Letter of the Month wins a copy of:
UFC 2010**

Congratulations David! You and Dan will be able to go toe-to-toe with each other with this MMA hit!

CUTTINGS

WAITING GAME

I agree with developers pushing back the release date on a game to polish it up, but what is up with *Gran Turismo 5*? Will we even see it on the PS3?

Willi Dick, email

You and 10 or so million other gamers are all asking the same question. Sit tight.

ON NOTICE

A reminder to my brother when he reads this, SEND MY MAG TO ME THIS TIME!

Callan Reed, Facebook

Callan's brother, you have been warned.

FORTUNE TELLER

Hearing you guys talk about *God of War 3* I thought it was gonna be brutal, and you were right!

James Russo, Facebook

We're surprised you're surprised, James.



THE GODS MUST BE LAZY

Hey OPS, I'm fairly new to the mag and just thought I'd add my two cents concerning *God of War III*.

Honestly, I've read review after review praising the hell out of this game and I'm sort of getting over hearing how good it is. I know not many people AT ALL will agree with me, but I just didn't think the game lived up to its expectations.

Don't get me wrong, the blood, gore and Aphrodite were all top notch and for the first half of the game, it had me by the balls. It

started right where part II left off and it was all high octane. That isn't necessarily a bad thing, given you can maintain that level of excitement or exceed it.

The second half of *GOWIII* didn't maintain that level. Take *Heavy Rain* for example, it was criticised by many for its slow and steady start, but praised for its build up, level of excitement and sense of suspense towards the end. For a story to be as engaging as one like this, it has to have a build up to a climax. I felt the climax for *GOWIII* was at the beginning. Seriously, most of the gods were dead before you reached the halfway point. Then after that, with all the 'Labyrinth' stuff, it felt as if you were just killing time (and bad guys) until you could go up and rip Zeus apart.

If the gods were all evenly spaced out throughout the game, maybe it could of maintained its high energy, but I felt it started to drop a couple of gears. There also wasn't as many 'puzzles' as you would normally see in *GOW* or *POP*, but that's not really that big of a deal. Anyway, I know I'm probably the only person in Australia who thinks this, but hey, it's my opinion and I just thought I'd voice it to you guys. And if I piss off a few people along the way, they can always just sign a petition to ban people who are aged 18+ from writing.

Keep doing what you're doing guys, 'cause you're doing it well.

Abraham Chalhoub, NSW

SPEAK TO US!

Love the mag? Hate the mag? We want your opinions and questions on OPS, on games – on anything that you feel the need to share with your fellow readers. The best letter of each issue wins the Game of the Month! Write to us on paper or on a computer at:

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NSW 1355**

**ops@
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com.au**

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STOREFRONT

We play the games so you can pick the cream from the crock. What deliciousness have you bought lately?



Angry Sackboy: leading you astray

SOUTH SIDE

I am a 30-year-old long-time gamer and reader of your prestigious mag. You have never steered me wrong, but I'm not that sure you haven't steered me wrong before because of your ill-informed April 2010 'The Deep South' segment by Angry Sackboy.

I always read Sackboy's article and agree mostly with his rants. After reading April's letter I believed him as I have no interest in politics and never heard of the law. After I read the article a few more times it dawned on me.

I was at JB Hi Fi checking games and Blu-rays and I noticed blank covers on R18+ movies, although they now have their very own shelf with a pretty sign saying R18+ over here everyone, which was less than a couple of metres away.

Sackboy was not completely wrong as I checked on this law. It stated R18+ movies need to be located on a separate shelf away from other movies or alternatively stored in blank black boxes.

Key word, 'alternatively'. I can understand the concept of separate shelves although don't fully agree with it.

I'm not proud of the fact every gamer's favourite politician lives here, and I have done my part in the R18+ game law issue. I have filled in the discussion paper and signed every R18+ paper at game shops,

But to have Angry Sackboy go off at us as a state because of that politician stuck in the dark ages is crap.

We may not have big cities and stadiums and clubs like you, but we also don't have your pollution, rate of crime, roadtolls, etc. I could go on but I won't.

Adelaide is a nice quiet city to raise a family relatively safe and cheaper than houses of same size in the east.

You guys in the east all think you're better than the rest of us.

I have been to all capital cities and would never raise my family anywhere but Adelaide.

I will continue to read OPS as PS3 is my religion, but I will never read Sackboy's eastern state propaganda again. Fight the cause, dude.

The enemy of my enemy is my friend.

Angry Red Wez, via email

Sackboy is really only attacking the policies of your state, not you. Still, now that you mention it, New South Wales is kind of awesome...

DIED HARD

Hey guys, just thought I'd write in to say that you are doing a great job with the mag and to keep it up. Also I want to touch on a little issue that has me a bit concerned.

Upon opening the newspaper the other day

I stumbled across two separate articles about games (One was about *Heavy Rain*, can't remember the other one) as well as a whole page dedicated to game reviews!

Now this is a great step forward for our medium, but it concerns me. I am worried that with games becoming more mainstream, more popular and more profitable, I feel that if they follow the same trend as almost all other popular media, games will become washed out images of their once vibrant selves.



Is the mainstream taking over?

Take the music industry for example. How much would you prefer to listen to anything from the '70s than Lady Gaga or some other diluted, generic 'pop' attempt?

Or films? Two words: *Die Hard*. It finally lived up to its title; maybe it should stay dead this time.

Of course I understand that you do get a gem in the mix here and there, as with games, but that diamond is going to be harder and harder to find.

Are we screwed?

Jeff Lesheim, via email

Gaming is easily as mainstream as movies and music already. We're already there, and we still get great games. For every hackneyed piece of crap there'll be a real stunner. Movies, music, it all works the same way. We'd rather snort broken glass than listen to Lady Gaga, but the existence of shit music doesn't cancel out the existence of awesome music. Wait, you didn't like *Die Hard*? But it's *Die Hard*! Come on man!



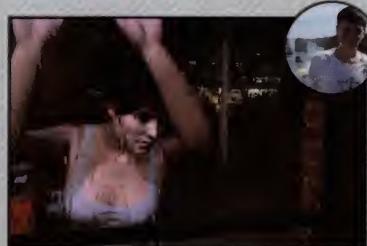
Pictured: everything, now in bits

LOVE IS

I recently bought *Battlefield: Bad Company 2*. I'm just writing in to say it is a great game. Although I haven't played much of the campaign, I have been playing online for a while and I love it. It's very realistic how pretty much everything can be smashed to bits.

Shenae Giraldi, via email

We dug it too, but we remain of the opinion the campaign isn't anywhere near as charming or entertaining as the original. Man cannot always live on multiplayer alone. What say you, single-player fans?



Edmond Sherif
Heavy Rain

"I wanted to see what all the fuss was about. I've played through the story three times already, experiencing three different endings."



Garrath Brand
Far Cry 2

"I saw the special edition on sale, bought it, loved it. Can't believe I missed out on such a great game."



Sanjeevi Visagamoorthy
God of War

"It's one of the BEST games I've ever played. Awesome storyline and gameplay, and the developers have incorporated feedback given by the players."



Lexie-Batman-Taylor
Resistance: Fall of Man

"I just bought *Resistance: Fall of Man*! I love the *Resistance* series and I found the game for \$20, so I couldn't go past that!"

CAPTION THIS!

We have the screen, and all your captions are belong to us. Well, one, anyway. Congrats to Daryl Andrew Noack! Check out Facebook on Fridays for your chance to win!



Human pyramid: you're doing it wrong

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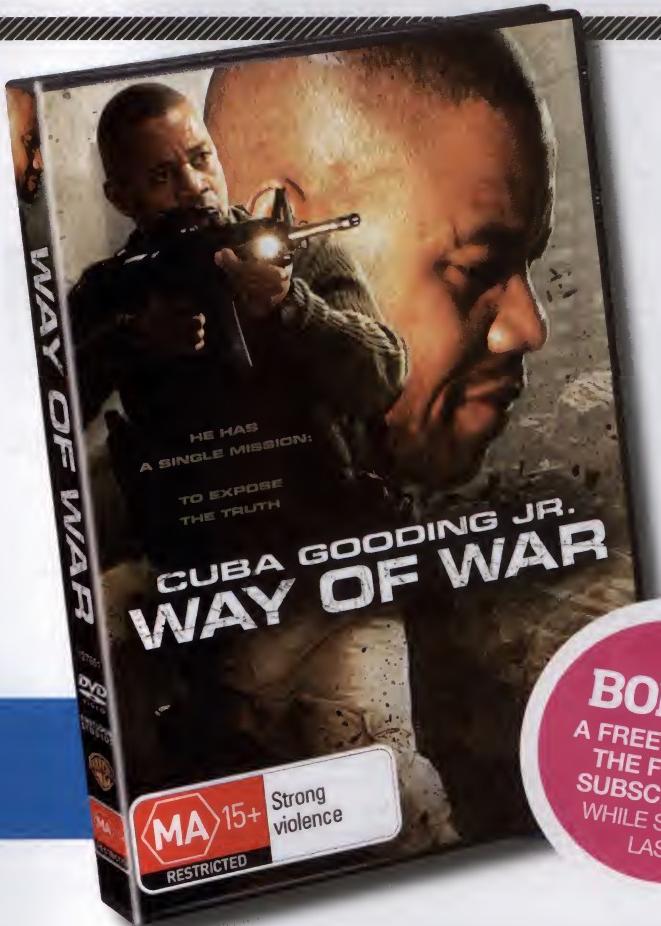
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INCOMING

“Throughout the campaign you'll follow Optimus as he learns who he is”

INFO

FORMAT: PS3 | EXPECTED RELEASE: LATE 2010 | DISTRIBUTOR: ACTIVISION
DEVELOPER: HIGH MOON STUDIOS | PLAYERS: 1-10

TRANSFORMERS: WAR

[Insert the Transformers 'transform noise' here]

TIt's been a full 26 years since we fell in love with those robots in disguise. But while it warms the cockles of our hearts to watch a cartoon from our youth get rebooted into popularity again – we've still got a bone to pick. The re-imagining of certain Autobot and Deception robot designs, we can accept. The WTF plot of the second *Transformers* movie we could endure (thanks mainly to Megan Fox). No, our biggest problem with the Transformers modernisation is the way they swapped the iconic transform sound.

With this being a magazine – a purely visual medium – we can't accurately describe why the original sound effect is superior. Hell, we spent a week just trying to encapsulate it in onomatopoeia. As a result, we now know that not even Jesus himself can spell out that noise in letters. But trust us, the first transform sound was the Bumblebee's knees. It was a pleasant surprise then when we played *Transformers: War for Cybertron* and heard High Moon Studio's glorious take on the sound effect.

THE PITCH

Transformers meets multiplayer. This third-person shooter is the Cybertron origin story that Hasbro never fully told you about.



They've created an almost perfect hybrid that synthesises the old with the new, plus a little something extra. Quite frankly, that tiny design decision serves as a perfect metaphor for the team's greater approach to this title.

We got a chance to travel to sunny San Diego – which is German for [snip – Ed] – to be taken through the game and have High Moon's vision explained to us by Matt Tieger, head director on TWFC. “The start for everything on this project was core gameplay; how it feels under your thumb, what the frame rate should be, what sort of controls you should have. Only after figuring out the mindset for that sort of hardcore game experience, did we then decide to infuse it with the Transformers license – which, I think, is distinctively different to the way most licensed games are approached nowadays”.

Frankly, after suffering through every other half-arsed Transformers game ever made – except for the Aussie-made one on PS2, which rocked – we couldn't agree more with Tieger. High Moon's dedication to building a

solid foundation in gameplay and layering on *Transformers* on top of that makes a lot of sense.

As you may have already deduced, this game is set on Cybertron, which is the terrestrial home of the robot entities we call Transformers. The Transformers who live there have not been pre-built as either an Autobot or Decepticon; they have all made a conscious decision to join one side or another, which is the impetus of a civil war that you'll be right in the thick of. Autobots believe in freedom, standing in heroic poses and wearing goody two shoes. Decepticons believe in strict order, have a disturbing love affair with the colour purple and are generally utter bastards whenever possible. These two different factions translate into two separate campaigns in TWFC, and you can choose to play them in either order. Essentially, the Decepticon campaign will function as a prequel to the events of the Autobot campaign.

The good guy campaign centres on an Autobot named Optimus. Not ‘Optimus Prime’ – as he is not the guy in charge (in fact, he doesn't



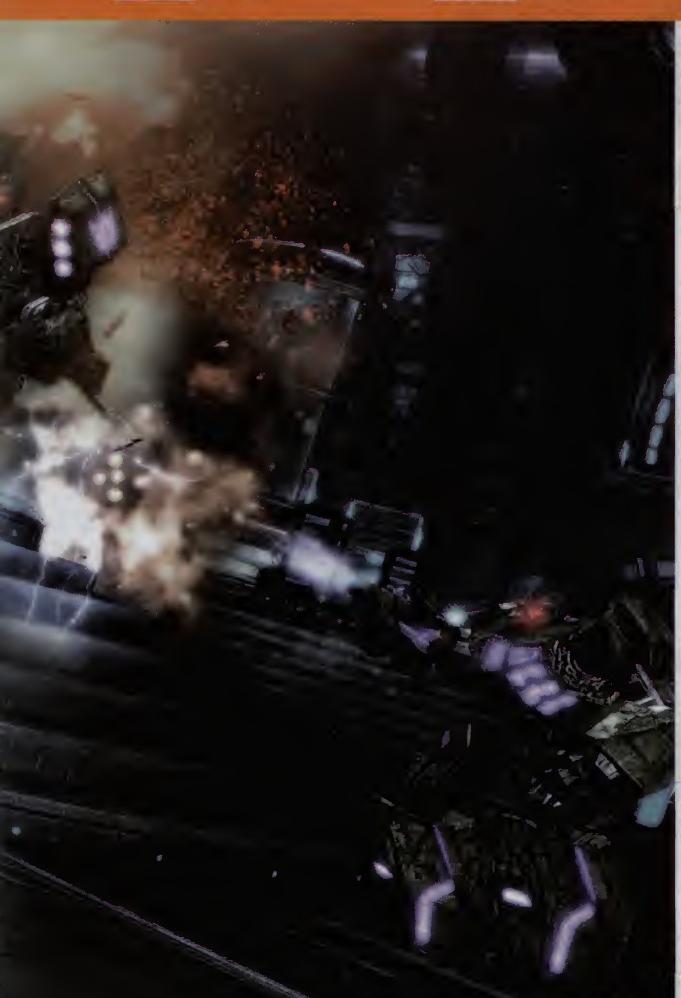
36 MARVEL VS. CAPCOM 3
The beat 'em up to end all beat 'em ups. February '10.



38 PRINCE OF PERSIA: THE FORGOTTEN SANDS
Shifting sands. February '10.



40 SPIDER-MAN: SHATTERED DIMENSIONS
Worlds collide. March '10.



Not pictured: robots in disguise

Cyber truck is cyber



Where should you shoot this walking junkpile? How about in his glowing junk?



FOR CYBERTRON

IT'S SO METAL

Classically, Cybertron was the body of the Transformers' creator, Primus. Cybertron is (almost always) a shining metal, technological world with towering future cities without end, vast metallic plains, spiraling metal mountains and bottomless neon-lit chasms.

We wonder if they run on Vista?



even want to be in charge at all). Throughout the campaign you'll follow Optimus as he learns who he is, the value he brings to Cybertron and the challenge of bearing the mantle of his destiny to become the bad-arse, mothertrucking leader we all know him to be.

We scored a glimpse at an early level playing as Optimus and immediately liked what we saw. The game employs a three-player drop-in-drop-out co-op experience, but for the purposes of our demo we were flanked by AI versions of Optimus' usual Autobuddies; Bumblebee and Ratchet. Controlling Optimus offered up a nice balance between 'weighty stomping about' and having enough mobility to dodge incoming bullets. Shoot and fine aim are located on the triggers, melee (in the form of a bitchin' battle axe) resides on the R3 and transform is on your L3 – which proves handy, as you don't have to remove your fingers from the core buttons to transition between your humanoid and transport form. On your HUD you can check your two weapon load out, and all weapons are

INCOMING



NORTH VS. SOUTH

Cybertron was historically organised into city-states, the largest and most important being the civilised Autobot capital of Iacon. Kaon is the Decepticon-controlled city-state in the southern hemisphere. It is an industrial ghetto and houses all sorts of radical troublemakers.



Do you know why Megatron always transformed into a pistol?

Because deep down inside he just wanted to be held



ammunition based – not heat – which ought to make the more laser gun-phobic gamers feel more at home. On the other half of the HUD you have a segmented health system that allows a structured amount of life regeneration – extinguish one of your four Energon cubes and it's gone, only lose half a cube and it'll fill up again (if you keep your metal bucket head down). Also, if you have Ratchet handy he'll live up to his stereotypical name and heal you, lickety-split.

Pursuant of that, every Transformer has two special abilities to draw upon during a battle – which is why you'll choose one character over another. The first half of your ability set is a cool-down skill (needs to slowly regenerate after use). In Optimus' case he has a dash that lunges him in any direction you choose. The second half of the ability set is a Resource skill (which becomes useable once you've wrecked a certain number of enemies). For example; Optimus has a War Cry that buffs up his defensive and offensive capabilities for a short time. Also, because he is a 'Leader class' Transformer, he can boost his allies potency too, if they're within range of said War Cry. Other classes include Scientist, Scout and Soldier – all of which are detailed below. These abilities definitely came in handy when we made Optimus go tyre to tyre with

hordes of Decepticons and a sub-boss called a Decepticon Brute. As the name suggests, the brute has been welded up like a Sherman tank and is packing a riot shield and a large Neutron Assault Rifle. Going evasive, we transform into vehicle form and zip to some cover, unloading heavy-cannon rounds at him as we scoot. It's interesting to note that transformations are handled quite swiftly in this game. You can even interrupt a transform halfway through if you need to to melee or blast someone into slag.

Once we're safely hidden in cover, we stumble across a weapon that puts a big smile on our (truck) grille. The Ion Blaster is roughly the length of a lampost and, once we grab it, the gun instantly does a 'mini-transformation' to better tailor itself to Optimus' iconic red and blue paintjob. It's a small visual touch, but it causes us to nod appreciatively before we use it to lay waste to the Brute.

Next up, we get to see some of the Decepticon campaign which, Matt assures us, takes places over completely different levels and geometry (rather than just rehashing what has been played before in the Autobot campaign). In the bad guy storyline, Megatron has been the unquestioned leader of the Decepticons in the civil war for an extraordinarily long time. While seeking a tactical advantage in the conflict he

TRANSFORMING NOOBS INTO SCRAP

The biggest surprise with *Transformers: War for Cybertron* is how awesome the multiplayer mode is. How awesome? Well, we had a quiet word with a High Moon employee who informed us that Treyarch (creators of *Call of Duty: World at War*) has visited their studio to help them streamline the multiplayer experience. The results show. Your own custom built Transformer can be dropped into one of the following four classes.

SCOUT: Sacrifices armour for mobility, has a car vehicle form and comes standard with the Cloak, Mark Target, Decoy Trap and Dash abilities. His kill streak rewards: 3 kills – Orbital Beacon, 5 kills – Energon Recharger, 7 kills – Radar Jammer

SCIENTIST: A sneaky support class, turns into a jet and comes standard with the Drain, Shockwave, Disguise and Deploy Sentry abilities. His kill streak rewards: 3 kills – Health revive, 5 kills – Overshield Boost, 7 kills – Neutron Shock Cannon

LEADER: An all-rounder with larger weapons, turns into a truck and comes standard with the Warcry, Barrier, Molécylon Bomb and Transform Disruptor abilities. His kill streak rewards: 3 kills – Missile Strike, 5 kills – Hover, 7 kills – Thermal Mine

SOLDIER: A purely offensive beast, turns into a tank and comes standard with the Hover, Whirlwind, Ammo Beacon and Energon Sling. His kill streaks include: 3 kills – Ammo Matrix, 5 kills – Electromagnetic Pulse, 7 kills – Omega Missile





"Deception? More like Decepticons! Right guys?" *crickets*

happens across an ancient research program that has 'gone dark' on a planetoid orbiting Cybertron. The secret locked there provides a way to turn Energon into a stupidly destructive, living-crystal blight – which is right up Megatron's alley.

Before we drop into our first evil mission we're given the choice to pre-select who we want to play as and who our two allies will be. Our High Moon guides quickly scroll to the Transformers they 'want us to see', but our keen eyes register a few old favourites including Barricade, Thundercracker, Skywarp and Breakdown. We select Starscream, Megatron and Soundwave and proceed to learn the three main combat tactics within the game; correct weapon usage (self-explanatory), combat abilities (mentioned earlier), and transform flanking. The latter involves TWFC sacrificing any cover-system in favour of having you blitzkrieg around or over enemy emplacements in your vehicle form at the drop of a hat. This concept really comes into its own when you're playing as the jet-based character like Starscream. In a second you can transition from ground-based gun fighting, to dealing death from above, and back again. Not only is it an amazingly fun tactic to pull off in single player, but it's also a challenge to defend against in the game's online adversarial mode.

After only a brief time spent with *Transformers: War for Cybertron*, it was plainly obvious that it's being meticulously welded together by a passionate bunch of gamers who are also diehard fans of *Transformers*. But while there is a palpable sense of respect for the original series, High Moon Studios hasn't been afraid to get creative; Matt and his team have crafted awesome re-imaginings of the original characters and have the full blessing license holder, Hasbro. They've also been bold enough to reconfigure a few gameplay mechanics that never really gelled in every other *Transformers* title we've ever played. For example; the concept of transforming into a car and awkwardly driving about combat environments designed for gun fighting was always problematic. Hence these new *Transformers* are now hover vehicles that are much more reactive



Nobody trucks with Optimus

and, more importantly, allow you to strafe using the exact same control method as your humanoid form. If any purists do find themselves missing their wheels they can pull R2 to make some tyres drop down and they can drive about as they would a regular car.

It's also important to note that this is the very first time Hasbro is letting anybody define what happens on Cybertron. Sure, we all saw brief snippets in comic books and the old '80s cartoons – but this will be the definitive, official canon look and story of what really went down on this mysterious metallic Mecca. It's quite an honour, and it certainly looks as though High Moon Studios is aware of the fact.

Thanks to an entertaining combat system, a robust multiplayer mode – and the fact that this game is targeted at 18- to 30-year-olds (not the ankle-biting ADD sufferers) – it looks like this title is being bolted together by very capable hands indeed. We simply can't wait for this to transform and rollout. **Adam Mathew**

THEY SAY

"Over-the-shoulder, third-person robot action with both online and offline co-op and a perks-based adversarial mode"

WE SAY

This is like *Transformers* fan porn. Features a great origin story, great voice talent and slick, re-jigged robot designs. Bring it on. We're ready to go.



INCOMING



New York City is the most natural setting for some ultra-violence

INFO

FORMAT: PS3 | GENRE: FIGHTING | EXPECTED RELEASE: 2011
DISTRIBUTOR: THQ | DEVELOPER: CAPCOM | PLAYERS: 1-2

MARVEL VS. CAPCOM 3: FATE OF TWO WORLDS

Registering a 'hell yeah!' out of 10 already

Please, take a moment to drink in those screenshots. Not only because they look like Street Fighter IV and Marvel comics had the world's sexiest offspring, but because this is a rare chance to soak up visual nuances you won't see when MvC3 is in full motion. And while OPS is the only publication this side of the equator to have these screens for you to gaze at, we're also one of the

lucky few outside of Capcom and Marvel to see the game in motion, with details that no-one else in the southern hemisphere knows about.

The roster at this stage is only a fraction of what it will become, though there's no definite number of total combatants. Out of the 10 we saw – Ryu, Dante, Morrigan, Felicia and Chris Redfield from the Capcom side, Wolverine, Iron Man, The Hulk, Capt. America and Deadpool from the Marvel stable – all recurring characters have been totally overhauled from their days in MvC2, and there's a barn-full of difference



THE HAGGAR FACTOR

We sat down with series producer Ryota Niituma and asked him a burning question: When will you be announcing Haggar as a playable character? His response, once he finished laughing? "So you've decided that he's gonna be in the game, no matter what?" Yup. "Well, you'll just have to wait for that announcement to see if it's confirmed!" Scoundrel. "There's a list of characters that were on the table, and I wanted to include a couple of the monsters [from Resident Evil], like Nemesis or Tyrant, but they were considered a little too grotesque when considering ratings. From the Marvel side there was a couple we couldn't use. We considered using some of the Fantastic 4 characters, but for various reasons we just couldn't implement them."



Wolverine has been known to circumcise a gnat. Uncle Buck style

between *MvC3* and *SFIV*; apart from some of the characters appearing in both titles, nothing here is recycled.

Characters' move sets reflect their signature characteristics, and some are utterly charming. Dante, decked out in his *Devil May Cry 3* costume, has attacks from all of the *DMC* games. Deadpool is a hoot, breaking the fourth wall; one of his hyper combos sees him use the health bar and hyper meter to smash his opponent, and spamming his teleport too many times in a row makes it short-circuit. Chris Redfield retains his *RE5* haymaker, and has even pulled out a shotgun, magnum and SMG for his ranged attacks.

The biggest change at this stage to the three-on-three brawler is its fighting system. *MvC2*'s two punch, two kick layout has been replaced by a light, medium, heavy scheme, as well as the brand new 'exchange' button. The two assist buttons, used to call in your partners, remain. The LMR scheme means that your attacks are context sensitive, so busting out quarter circles or charge moves and an attack button will do what you expect it to with your chosen character. Capcom assures us that it feels natural – 95 per cent of the techniques from *MvC2* are in *MvC3* – and while they definitely take the hardcore seriously, they do not fear their reaction to this at all.

The exchange button is a game changer. *MvC2* promoted vertical combat unlike other fighters of the time, with radical aerial combos either beginning on the ground and continuing many storeys above, or just starting in the air up there. Getting the opponent skyward, however, was a barrier for some players. The button presses required for these 'launcher' moves wasn't universally common: sometimes it was a standing heavy kick, or a crouching heavy punch, or even something different. Now, press the exchange button and your opponent is up and away. From there the exchange button exposes a whole other layer of gameplay.

One level above the ground, you have four choices. You can either begin an attack (be it a combo or Hyper Combo), or use the exchange button in conjunction with a direction on the d-pad which will call in one of your team mates, send your opponent back down to the ground

and continue the combo, or launch them skyward up to two more times.

Where it gets interesting is that your opponent has a small window to counteract what you're going to do with the exchange button: if they can guess it right they break out of your attack. You can flow straight into traditional combo that they can't escape from, but your combo possibilities aren't as big as if you're willing to gamble your advantage and press the exchange button.

All of that is just one change that's being promised. Visually, you can already see how it's coming together, though this is early days. In motion, hyper combos are a light show of particle effects combined with vivid brush strokes, reflections bouncing off armour and shiny skin. Marvel have much bigger hand in *MvC3*'s production compared to *MvC2*, and their involvement is most prevalent in the backgrounds. As Seth Killian, Capcom's Community Manager and Special Advisor for *Marvel Vs Capcom 3*, told us, the backdrops in *MvC2* were "bizarro fantasy zones" that had nothing to do with the characters on screen.

We saw two stages, one from the Marvel and Capcom side. The Marvel stage was set on a rising platform in the Marvel version of New York City. Reporters scurried around taking photos, and a huge parade float shaped like Spiderman loomed between Daily Bugle banners and a gigantic, building-sized Chun-Li billboard. As the platform ascended we also spied the Baxter Building that's home to The Fantastic Four. Marvel's Tron Bonne stage was set in front of Cattle Ox Island with various Serv Bot characters flitting about.

As the action got more intense, parts of the screen began to tear like the pages of a comic book. Characters dashing backwards and forward kicked up shaded plumes of dust, and the more wild combos and moves evolved from eliciting calls of 'Cool!', 'Good!' and 'Excellent!' to 'DUDE!' from the announcer.

MvC3 is a game fans have demanded since *MvC2* came out nearly 10 years ago, which is a testament to the series' strength. Given Capcom has a fighting background that spans almost 20 years, it's certainly on the right track to make this another legendary brawler. ▲ Paul Taylor



THEY SAY

"Has comic touches throughout, from special art-style shaders, to catchphrases and special in-game events"

THE PITCH

Take the aerial madness of *MvC2*, strip out the fruit and inject lashings of bold, beautiful art.



WE SAY

It looks like a comic book that's come to life, and this should absolutely rock your world. This is well on the way to being a supremely polished fighter.

Bad shape	Needs work	Got potential	Looking good	Sure-thing	Guaranteed
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IT'S ELEMENTAL

Prince's one button attack scheme is bolstered with four elemental special powers that either modify his attacks or increase his defence, plus you can also improve your abilities in the 'evolution' menu by collecting XP from defeating enemies. We weren't able to access this in our preview build, so we can only guess what it will allow the Prince to do.

The old 'icicle to the testicle' technique, huh? *Classic*



The Prince had a hard-line stance on anorexia



INFO

FORMAT: PS3 | GENRE: ACTION | EXPECTED RELEASE: MAY 2010
DISTRIBUTOR: UBISOFT | DEVELOPER: UBISOFT MONTREAL | PLAYERS: 1

PRINCE OF PERSIA: THE FORGOTTEN SANDS

With no added Nolan

The Prince has gone back to his roots, stylistically and philosophically. While 2008's Prince looked great, and the emphasis on jumping rather than fighting was sound, the Prince himself grated a bit. His surfer dude dialect (thanks Nolan!) and foppish appearance felt less like the reserved yet solid Prince of old and more like an insufferable jerkbag. The decision for him to not die, always having a literal helping hand from his nubile assistant, wasn't unanimously liked. Ditching the central mechanic of the *The Sands of Time* trilogy – the ability to turn back time – was necessary in terms of story and progression for the series as a whole, though it was sorely missed by some.

Enter *The Forgotten Sands*, which feels a lot like *The Sands of Time* 2.0. And that's a very good thing, as familiar mechanics and character designs return with a very pretty HD makeover.

Ubisoft have read the George Lucas quick-start manual for exploiting a franchise with this

'interquel'. Taking advantage of the seven-year gap between *The Sands of Time* and *The Warrior Within*, the story of *The Forgotten Sands* slots between the two, however there's a bunch of new stuff to increase the Prince's repertoire of moves: the most notable is the ability to freeze water at will.

Waterfalls become solid walls to run up and along, jets of the wet stuff solidify into monkey bars to swing on, and fissures in the ceiling make handy poles to jump on and around. It does add an extra layer to puzzles but at times it just felt another button to press as we leapt from beam to water, then through a waterfall and back to a beam of water. It occasionally turns the joyful part of the game – picking your way up and across incredible structures – into a reaction-based affair, juggling shoulder button presses whilst occasionally battling with the camera. Of course, we've only seen a handful of stages so we'd like to see freezing water implemented into battles, and there's still time for the camera controls to be loosened up.

Perhaps more obvious is the improvement to the graphics. Those screenshots don't lie; this is a beautiful looking game with grand environments that loom overhead and weave into multiple puzzles. While the Prince's animations don't match those of Nathan Drake's, *Forgotten Sands* runs on the same engine as *Assassin's Creed II*. Despite the technical prowess it needed more work to bring it up to Ezio standards, but we'd attribute this to the game's inherent linearity over *Assassin's* free-flowing gameplay. Nevertheless, Prince has a lot of charm and we're very optimistic about this latest title. With more control over the camera and (hopefully) challenging and thought-provoking water-based puzzles, this ought to be a hit for the artist we formerly knew as Prince. **Paul Taylor**

THE PITCH

The old *Prince of Persia* given special powers to fight off nasties, wrapped up in HD graphics.

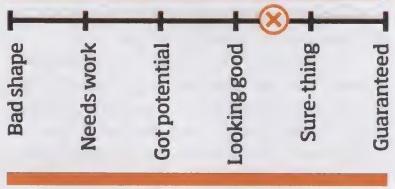


THEY SAY

"Will offer players unforgettable set pieces made possible by the advanced technology offered by the award-winning Anvil engine"

WE SAY

It looks great, and the decision to make a new adventure based on old Prince is a good one. The camera system needs to be tweaked, but this is well on track.



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INCOMING

“ The instant we saw it in action, we felt a tingling sensation in our arach-nads ”

One sticky situation



Spider-Man > this bat-man

Spider-Man: does whatever a spider can



"See my vest, see my vest..."

INFO

FORMAT: PS3 | **GENRE:** ACTION | **EXPECTED RELEASE:** LATE 2010 | **DISTRIBUTOR:** ACTIVISION | **DEVELOPER:** BEENOX | **PLAYERS:** 1

SPIDER-MAN: SHATTERED DIMENSIONS

THE PITCH

A Spider-Man adventure that shuns sandbox sensibilities in favour of multiple dimensions, boss fights aplenty and 1930s noir coolness.



Web surfing < web slinging

Now this is a little odd. Beenox – the hive-minded folks who developed *Bee Movie: The Game* – are now in charge of a spider adventure. Spiders eat bees. Are we alone in thinking that's a little counter to their brand manifesto? Based on their chosen company name and their previous work, we flat-out assumed they would only handle games focusing on yellow and black insects – not red and blue arachnid men. Failing that, we imagined they'd make games that at least keep the theme going – like a *Transformers* spin-off called "Bumblebee's Quest", or at least an adaptation of the Newman/Redford classic *The Sting*. What? We're not typecasting here. *You are*.

Whatever the case, when Beenox started conceptualising *Spider-Man: Shattered Dimensions*, it wanted to build upon the strengths of the existing Spider-Man titles, but also to mix things up and give fans something they haven't seen before. The *Spider-Man* franchise – whether you already know it or not – is host to quite a few different universes. Beenox

has decided to create a unique game experience that converges four of these different universes – some of which are familiar to the casual fan, others less so. Each alternate universe has its own distinct art style and Spidey himself looks and plays completely differently in each. With all this parallel dimension stuff going on you'd be forgiven for calling this *Sliders* with spiders. Incidentally, does anyone remember that TV show? Nobody? Fair enough.

After wading through industry and online feedback about the previous *Spider-Man* titles, Beenox quickly discovered that players loved epic boss fights but were generally displeased with the amount of time it took to experience such momentous events. In addition to this, people were becoming blasé about webslinging across half of New York City to fight a generic bunch of thugs that they had no emotional connection to. Boldly moving away from that potentially boring sandbox design, *Shattered Dimensions* will instead be a stage-based affair that will focus on an exceptionally large host of iconic *Spider-Man* villains.

We were lucky enough to head over to Los Angeles to check out two of the four universes on offer in the final game; the 'Amazing Spider-Man' universe (or 'Earth-616' – if you want to break out the nerd borax) and the *Marvel Noir* (Earth-7207). Our first demo opened with an *Amazing Spider-Man* level – you know, the classic looking Spider-Man who does the same old stuff he's been doing for the past 50 years. We were soon introduced to some slick 'ink and paper' treated visuals and were instantly reminded of the cel-shaded visual style of 2008's *Prince of Persia*. In the demo Spidey was swinging about an enclosed jungle canyon and the objective was to platform jump, lay waste to the locals and ultimately trigger a boss encounter with Kraven the hunter. All the usual pieces are in place here; you've got access to a plethora of well-animated fisticuff combos and you can use your webbing as a grappling hook to snatch enemies or to launch to higher ground. It all looked pretty solid,

but nothing we hadn't seen before.

The same cannot be said about our demo of a *Spider-Man Noir* level. The instant we saw it in action, we felt a tingling sensation in our arach-nads. If you're not completely familiar with *Spider-Man Noir* – take our word for it; the comic series was a violent, action-packed romp from the very first issue. The whole comic is an alternate take on the *Spider-Man* mythos in which Peter Parker becomes his spider self in the year 1933, during the Great Depression. Other differences include Norman Oswald being a disfigured underworld boss who employs out-of-work circus freaks, and alternate Spidey has resisted the urge of lyrca costumes. Instead, he rocks a black mask, gloves, a sweet trenchcoat (which is cut down to a vest in this game) and he also packs a gun too. In short; he's a bad arse, see?

The look and feel of the *Noir* universe is markedly different from that of *Amazing Spider-Man*. First of all, gone is the cotton-candy colourisation of the jungle – it has been replaced by a gritty monochromatic style that isn't unlike what Pandemic Studios attempted with *The Saboteur*. Similarly, the relatively mindless 'Pow!', 'Zak!' beat 'em up gameplay gives way to a very measured stealth experience. In truth, it is quite reminiscent of stalking about in *Batman Arkham Asylum*. Our goggled Spidey meticulously web-snatched tommy-gun-toting goons from their spot-lit patrol routes, viscously clocked them about the head and stuck their corpses to a wall (or hamstrung them from nearby lampposts). As the short demo progressed we got to scissor kick baseball bat goons in the face and even had a brief boss encounter with a gattling gun equipped Hammerhead.

During the brief time we spent with it, *Spider-Man: Shattered Dimensions* showed a great deal of promise. The move away from the sandbox element may annoy some fans, but we're cautiously optimistic about the decision. Swapping generic fights and been-there-done-that traversal for more boss fights certainly isn't the worst theory in the world.

But it's the inherent coolness of the *Noir* universe and the other two unannounced universes (and villains) that makes our lyrca feel a bit tighter than usual. Quick note to Beenox: it might be in your interest to reintroduce a *Spider-Man* villain from *The Champions* series. Get this; his name's Swarm – a.k.a. Fritz Von Meyer – and he's an ex-Nazi beekeeper who becomes a living bee swarm when he gets devoured by mutated bees. Solid plan, right there.  Adam Mathew

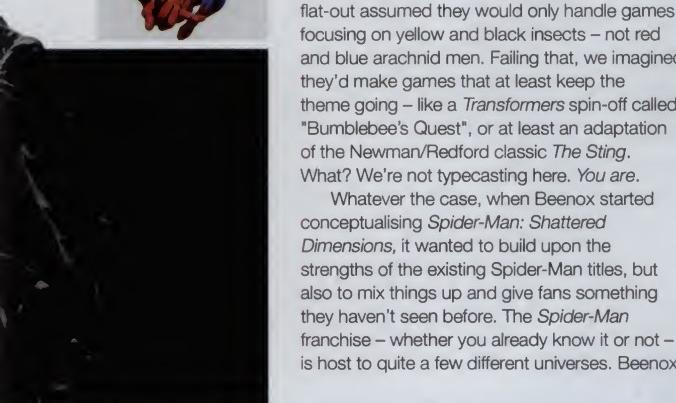
THEY SAY

"A quadriopod of our friendly neighbourhood Spider-Men working together to un-shatter their respective dimensions"

WE SAY

Currently, the *Noir* universe is totally where it's at. With some shrewd decisions made on the final two universes, this could be truly amazing.

Bad shape	Needs work	Got potential	Looking good	Sure-thing	Guaranteed
				X	





WHEN THE SITH GOES DOWN...

...You better be ready

WORDS: ADAM MATHEW

What's more kick-ass than a lightsaber? A lightsaber wielded *ninja-reverse* style. And the only level of coolness above that? Busting out two *ninja-reverse* style lightsabers and using them for brain surgery on a monster big enough to teabag a titan.

Doubling-up and going gargantuan is a sure-fire way to make something twice as awesome – and this is the direction LucasArts is taking with *The Force Unleashed II*. It's a good thing too; it set the bar pretty high with the first game. *The Force Unleashed* managed to shift over seven million units, win a bunch of awards from the Writer's Guild of America and its DLC was devoured by fans faster than Jabba on a free frog buffet. In the wake of such success LucasArts quickly

realised the enormous potential of the *TFU* brand and, according to executive producer Hayden Blackman, the company is investing quite heavily in *TFU II*.

In case you missed it, *TFU* introduced the ludicrously powerful force-wielder named Starkiller – a secret apprentice to Darth Vader who operated during the nebulous time period between *Episode III* and *IV*. Throughout his storyline we were also introduced to a rich cast of secondary characters, including a grizzled Jedi General named Rahm Kota, Proxy the holo-droid sidekick and a female Imperial officer named Juno Eclipse (who, incidentally, was hotter than Anakin's near-fatal lava bath).

At the conclusion of *TFU* Starkiller unified several Senators into a crude Rebel Alliance and, ultimately, had to sacrifice

himself in a battle against the Emperor to ensure their survival. So, yeah, golden boy sort of 'died' at the end there (sorry if we spoiled that for you, but it's going to be impossible to talk about this sequel without referencing what went down in a two-year-old game). As you may have already guessed from the original's extraordinary success, LucasArts is nowhere near done with Mr. Starkiller's story. Yes, sir – they've done a Lazarus.

TFU II is set mere months after the ending of *TFU*. The Rebel Alliance is a ragtag force growing in power, the Emperor is busy quelling opposition to his empire (and developing anti-wrinkle cream, no doubt) and Darth Vader is still stirring up Sith with his own secret plans. The opening cinematic kicks off with Vader's signature

TIE Fighter streaking down to the watery surface of Kamino – a storm planet that specialises in two things; kick-arse surf and cloning technology. It's quickly revealed that Darth has 'copied' Starkiller and has been secretly training him to undertake more dirty deeds. The young Jedi has only a limited, fragmented grasp of his old memories and during his training with a holo-droid Vader taunts him with the aforementioned acquaintances of his past.

When Vader presents Starkiller with a holo of Juno, the hapless captive simply cannot strike it down. Ever the understanding employer, Darth informs Starkiller that he is a useless, failed experiment. He tells Starkiller that he is an accelerated clone grown over a few months, a process which, irrevocably, comes with a few side effects (like a slight case of insanity, for example). After receiving this wonderful self-esteem boost, Starkiller promptly decides to hand in his resignation (read: he goes berserk and half destroys the facility). With his liberty gained, Starkiller embarks upon a lover's quest to locate Juno (in a bid to introduce her to his 'Wookiee co-pilot', we imagine).

In the opening level you're at large in Kamino; and not just the pokey, indoor cloning facilities the prequel trilogies touched upon. Nope, your desperate escape thrusts you outside into the elements where the environmental effects are greatly improved upon what was experienced in *TFU*; the never-ending ocean pitches and heaves underneath and both Starkiller and his Stormtrooper opponents are mercilessly pelted with realistic rain. As our jaw drops at the scene Blackman pipes in, "We wanted to start players off with a big

bang. Along with the chaotic environment we've got TIE Fighters shrieking past you, you're plummeting down vertical sections of the city, and you're shredding through metal obstacles with your considerable force powers".

Blackman points out that the team has been improving the experience under the hood as well: "We're using an upgraded version of the engine we used on *TFU* but all the same technologies are still in there. So we're using Havok as our underlying physics system and we have our Digital Molecular Matter (DMM) which simulates how different materials behave in the real world and also

euphoria which is bio-mechanical AI that makes for believable enemy reactions.

"We're still working on making the environments a lot more interactive, but as you can see we have a lot of things that you can throw at your enemies – or, conversely, throw your enemy into. Speaking of which, some of your favourite force powers from the original game will return and have gone through more iterations – we've streamlined the targeting system for all of them too".

This last point makes a whole lot of sense to us; we had issues pinpointing the specific Wookiee we wanted to abuse the last time around. And so we abused them all.



When Jedi scuff their feet on the carpet too much

So graceful. We haven't been moved like this since *The Joy Luck Club*





"Foolish Emperor! I fart in the general direction of your mechanised chickens!"

“Force Push now has you cannonballing hapless fools into orbit”

WHO IS STARKILLER?

The developers decided not to give Starkiller a name in *TFU*, but the novelisation gives his name as Galen Marek. Which is nowhere near as cool. The character's kick-ass 'Sith name' is actually a homage to 'Anakin Starkiller', the original name George Lucas had penned for the character that eventually became Luke Skywalker.

Speaking of hilariously flailing victims, Blackman assures us that they've improved their cast of baddies: "We've really focused on the number of enemies. In *TFU* we had a bunch of enemies that weren't very well differentiated, but in this level alone we have twenty highly unique enemies." He's not kidding either, during the onscreen onslaught we notice that there have been several stormtrooper types, jet troopers and even larger enemies like gunships too. While these newer enemies may be unique snowflakes compared to the 'clones' of the original, we make certain they all die in exactly the same way – badly.

After slicing a swathe through a legion of stormtroopers, Starkiller ends his stay on Kamino by TIE-jacking Vader's personal shuttle and blasting off into the cosmos. His first real lead on finding Juno is the blind Jedi Rahm Kota, who has since been captured by Imperial Forces on an

archway planet called Cato Neimoidia. This new planet is dramatically different from Kamino from an artistic standpoint; it's cast in a perpetual afternoon orange and its sprawling cities are built upon gargantuan, naturally occurring rock arches. It's a planet popular with tourists too, thanks to the local Imperial governor, Baron Yorga, popularised high-stakes gambling with arena-based bloodsports. If you've seen the pre-release teaser trailer you'll know precisely what we're talking about.

In order to reach Kota – who has managed to kick consecutive arse in the arena for seven days straight – Starkiller must first fight his way through the casinos and get to (force) grips with some of his newer powers. One such skill is Jedi Mind Trick, which has you fooling your enemies into relentlessly shooting their mates until they eventually explode in a glorious display of Force energy. There's also Force Fury

which is an overpower mode similar to Kratos' Rage of the Gods mechanic. When you trigger this mode all of your abilities get amped up; your Force Lightning and Force Grip will envelop multiple victims and your Force Push now has you cannonballing hapless fools into orbit.

Lightsaber-wise, *TFU* had a very deep and robust combo system that let you mix in slashing attacks with force powers. LucasArts is expanding upon that killer combination in *TFU II* thanks to the additional lightsaber and the Force Rage mechanic. In regular combat Starkiller can execute extremely flashy flourishes – in Force Rage he is Mace Windu on crystal meth. Blackman demonstrates the phenomenon onscreen by executing a nine or 10 hit combo string that has Starkiller dealing death like an insane upside-down breakdancing ninja – a feat which is enough to make everyone watching in the room



Two victims, two lightsabers. This was meant to be

"A mountain of a monstrosity who treats Rancors like you would Weetbix"



Strike a pose, there's nothing to it. Vogue

DISMEMBERING WHAT WENT BEFORE

In our minds, *TFU II* is not a Jedi yet. One thing remains. Dismemberment. It. Must. Include. Dismemberment by lightsabers. Think about it; slicing off limbs happens in every *Star Wars* movie. Ben Kenobi 'disarming' abusive cantina patrons. Luke getting divorced from Mrs. Palmer and her five daughters at the end of *Empire*. Anakin pruning Count Dooku six ways from Sunday. It all happened, it's all canon.

Why then are we being denied? We posed the question to Project Lead Julio Torres who masterfully deflected us like a blaster bolt. "We really want to make the saber count in *TFU II*. I can't tell you the exact details of what that's going to be, I think you'll be pleasantly surprised with the ideas we have in place. We don't want you to feel like a saber wielder because the moves look flashy – we want you to feel like the move that you just executed is going to pay off... and that's where I'd like to leave it today". Bantha poodoo? You decide.



Like most crappy employers, the Empire didn't supply hammocks



whoop in appreciation. The best is yet to come however; in a spectacular "look, Ma – no hands" moment, Starkiller uses the force to skilfully orbit his twin lightsabers around himself to cleave targets that are well out of normal range.

Grinning from the onscreen mayhem, Blackman continues to tell us about some further refinements: "Another thing we've really focused on in *TFU II* is better pacing. *TFU* was really just a non-stop combat experience and one of the things we wanted for the sequel was more of an ebb and flow between exploration and navigation puzzles where you'll need to employ your force powers and lateral thinking". In short, those of you who blitzed through the original without pausing – you're Sith outta luck.

Eventually Starkiller reaches Kota in the arena and we find ourselves right in the middle of the epic boss fight shown in the game's first teaser trailer. LucasArts plans to make overly large boss battles a hallmark of this sequel – and it shows. After murdering his staff and ruining the Feng Shui of his luxurious casino, Baron Yorga is suitably pissed with Starkiller and decides to unleash his greatest gladiator. Enter the Orlock; a mountain of a monstrosity who treats Rancors like you would Weetbix.

We won't spoil too much of what happens during this monumental fight, but we will just say that there is a chasm involved, a decidedly 'Gandalf vs. The Balrog' mid-air duel and that the brutal

finishing moves from *TFU* are back and much more visceral.

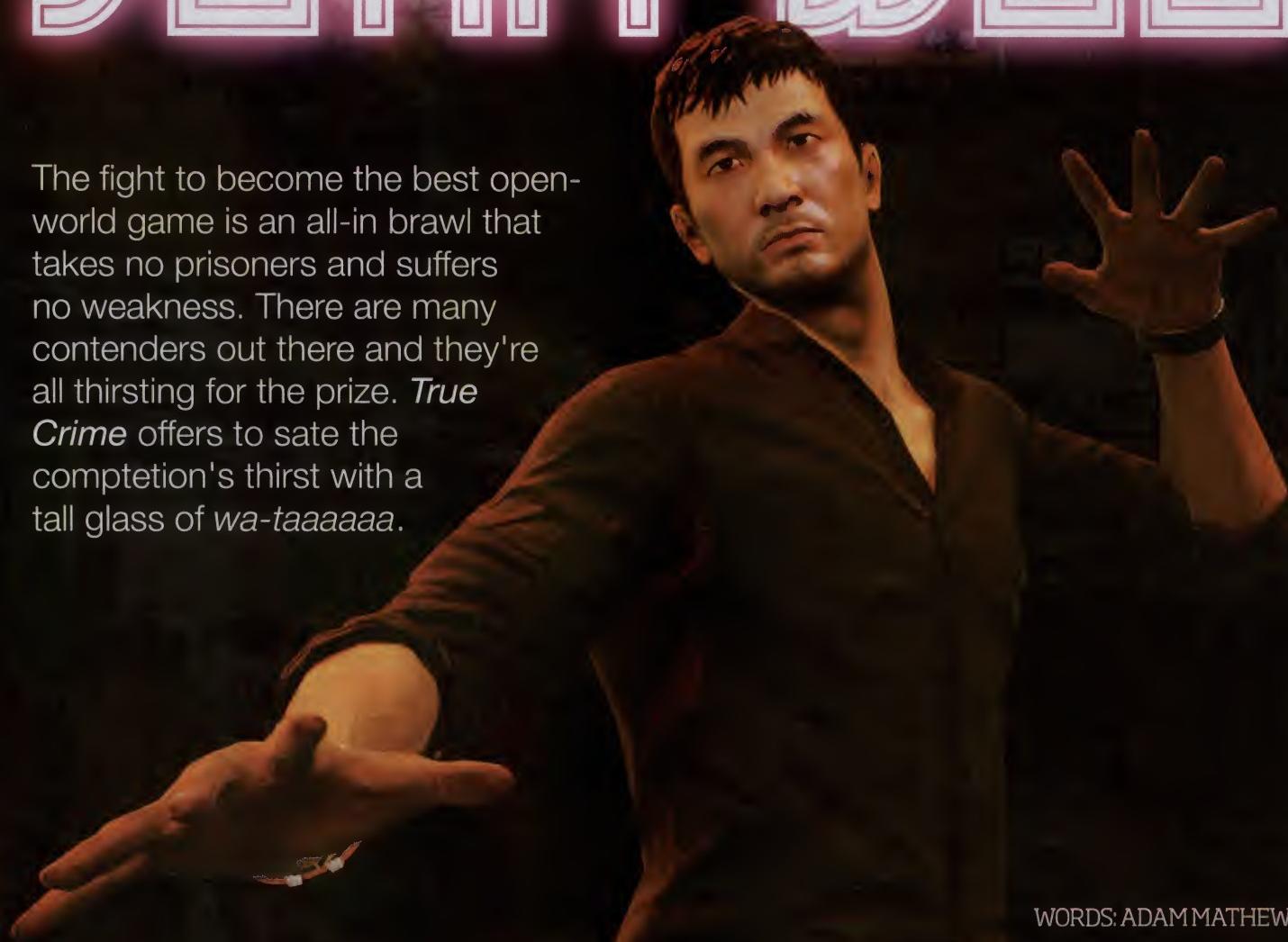
At the end of the battle, Kota is pleased to see Starkiller, as he represents one big Empire wrecking-ball. Starkiller wants none of this however; the fate of the galaxy doesn't interest him nearly as much as the fate of Juno. In the heated argument that follows Kota informs the young Jedi that force adepts can't be cloned and suggests that Vader may just be manipulating him. During his spiel Kota also drops the names of a few planets – including Dagobah, Yoda's hiding spot. The name immediately resonates with Starkiller as a place of immense power and he decides to head there immediately. Meanwhile, in this galaxy and time, we find ourselves feeling the early twinges of a nerd-boner.

Unfortunately, it's at this point that our behind-the-scenes tour begins to wrap up. But before we're ushered out, we see some concept art that strongly suggests that Starkiller has a date with Dagobah's 'cave of evil' and there's almost certainly going to be a Master Yoda rendezvous in there too. The prospect of rediscovering Dagobah really does symbolise our hopes for this sequel; there's a very real possibility that *TFU II* could be an *Empire Strikes Back* experience – as opposed to a crappy *Phantom Menace* abortion. And let's face the facts; having the over-powered Starkiller square up against mighty Yoda should be enough to ignite any serious fan's lightsaber, instantly. ♦



GTA meets Yakuza

The fight to become the best open-world game is an all-in brawl that takes no prisoners and suffers no weakness. There are many contenders out there and they're all thirsting for the prize. *True Crime* offers to sate the competition's thirst with a tall glass of wa-taaaaaa.



WORDS: ADAM MATHEW



"Nurse, cancel my one o'clock..." ↗

The concept of open-world action is about to be put in a wrist lock and ripped right out of its socket. After a five year hiatus, *True Crime* – the second biggest selling sandbox franchise all time – is set to fly-kick back onto the scene and start taking names. Crafted by talented studio United Front Games – of *ModNation Racers* fame – this third iteration of *True Crime* may be lacking a subtitle but is making up for the shortcoming with a glorious amount of violence. Set exclusively in Hong Kong, this sequel isn't just a head nod to classic Hong Kong action cinema; it's a full torso bow to them. In the spirit of that, we've decided to bold out certain sections of this preview that we think are made kick-arse, Hong Kong action movie subtitles. For example:

Bitchslapped by a kill.

Lead producer on the project, Jeff O'Connell, describes this latest iteration of *True Crime* as a "more serious" reboot. On the face of things, it's clear the story draws a great deal of inspiration from cop films like *The Departed*. You'll be sliding into the throat-kicking shoes of Detective Wei Shen, an officer of the HK Triad Bureau who has been assigned to go undercover and infiltrate the Triad organization called "Sun On Yee". As you can probably imagine, the plot focuses on the moral struggle of Wei to stay true to his mission and stop the Triads while keeping his cover and being as much like the criminal cohorts as possible. It's all very similar to the central conflict of *Splinter Cell: Double Agent*. In practical terms; Wei's typical day on the job involves dishing out slow-mo, ball-busting assaults on rival goons and racing about completing illegal courier jobs in one of the most exciting cities in the world. Not bad

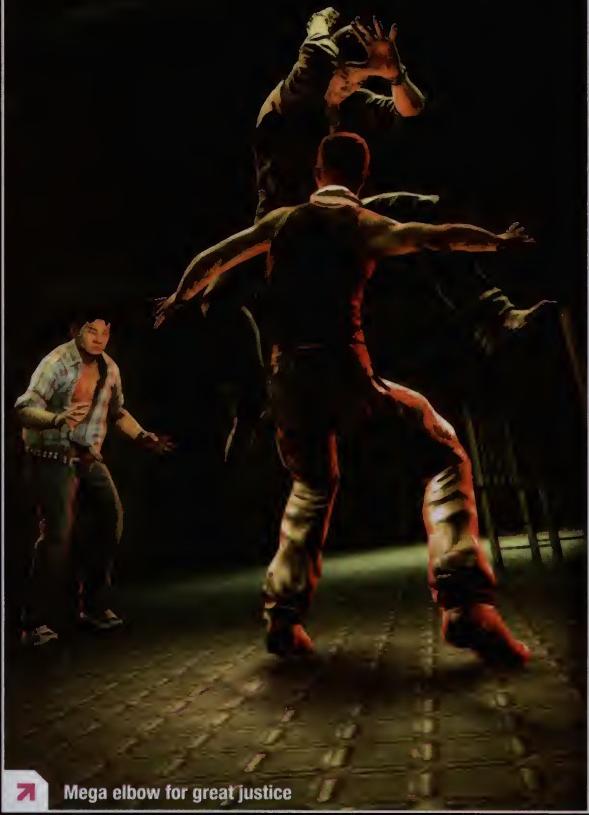
work, if you can find it.

Before you get too excited, you should be aware that this city isn't a **fully accurate snapshot** of the actual Hong Kong. Though United Fronts' art team has pored over 25,000 real-life reference photographs, O'Connell is quick to inform us that the city has been "rebuilt for gameplay". So while this re-imagining of the place can't be substituted for Google Maps, this version of the city is positively **oozing with death**-defying stunt opportunities and a spaghetti network of seedy side-alleys tuned for action. During a quick demo we were taken on a night cruise through the suburb of North Point – a neon streaked nightmare that is a mishmash of Chinese architecture and the ultra modern. In truth, it's difficult not to be reminded of the set-piece levels in 2007's *Stranglehold* – a much more linear Hong Kong action epic.

Hopping out at a warehouse owned by a rival Triad gang, we're soon given a taste of some of the visceral hand-to-hand action. Taking a much more conservative, Krav Maga approach to fistcuffs – as opposed to unrealistic, **flash kicks of justice** – Wei straight-up destroys the goons using flurries of versatile multi-directional attacks, grapples and tendon-snapping counters. Taking some cues from *The Bourne Conspiracy*, United Front have thrown in satisfying environmental takedowns that let you turn a rooms Feng Shui to your own violent advantage. Our personal favourites: smashing a goon's head on a dumpster and then hurling him in there, side-kicking mofos into electric generators, opening a freezer door into someone's front teeth or just making somebody kiss a brick wall. We were also very appreciative of the weapon disarm takedowns. Any armed



Let off some steam, Bennett ↗



↗ Mega elbow for great justice

SERIES RETRO RECAP

True Crime: Streets of LA – 2003 (developed by Luxoflux)

One of the first open world action games to be released after *Grand Theft Auto III*, *True Crime: Streets of LA* focused on the other side of the law in the 'police procedural' genre. The main protagonist was police officer Nick Kang, and we were given a good cop/bad cop rating based on the morality of our actions. These actions then affected the storyline, leading to one of three different endings.

True Crime: New York City – 2005 (developed by Luxoflux)

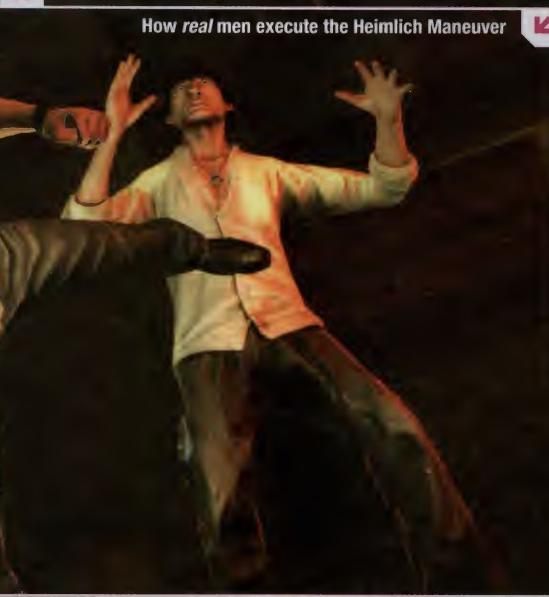
Admittedly, this was nowhere near as good as the first game. *True Crime: New York* followed gangbanger turned detective, Marcus Reed and the game was widely panned for its iffy story, bad frame rates and technical issues that seemed to have resulted from a rushed release. Allegedly it was the first part of a two-part series, but the second part was eventually cancelled. Developer Luxoflux is now defunct and has nothing to do with this much needed reboot of the *True Crime* series.



Wei's long-time partner, Wang, is in serious trouble here



Wei, of the exploding fist



How real men execute the Heimlich Maneuver



Wannabe ginger must pay

Two things to note; you'll still have to skilfully flick a stick to zero in on that **headshot** and **bear** in mind that you may sometimes need to incapacitate, rather than kill – you are still a cop, after all. Kind of.

Our first mission starts out as a simple **brawl and shoot** out in a Triad warehouse, but soon takes a left turn and becomes a very uncooperative hostage situation. Wei locates a Triad boss who is worth much more alive than dead, and thus we have to employ a 'sprinting human shield' mechanic to manhandle him back through the warehouse, whilst unloading at henchmen trying to intervene. After much **blasting**, the **boss** manages to break free of our kung-fu grip, makes his way to an escape car and thunders away. Not to be Shanghaied, we hijack a nearby cop's motorcycle and the mission takes another turn to become a desperate vehicle chase through streets.

It's at this point that we truly begin to

enemies who came at us earned a swift nose break and their own **meat cleavers** lodged into their sternum. Also, in case you're wondering – yes, you can go through the whole game armed with a meat cleaver.

Wei can also use his considerable martial arts training to ninja traverse the environment during any fire fight he's in. Along with the usual cover-system opportunities he can vault over obstacles or slickly slide across a **table to deliver a boot** into anybody trying to use it for cover. Speaking of parkour antics, when we had a quiet word with a few UF Games employees later on, we heard whisperings

of Wei also having some decidedly 'Ezio Auditore' abilities. These skills allow you to scramble up low walls, swiftly 'crowd run' through throngs of pedestrians and even execute 'leap of faith' style jumps to get hang-time while launching from rooftop to rooftop or down into street-level landing areas.

Also, this obviously wouldn't be much a Hong Kong action homage without off-the-chain **gun battles** – and Wei gunslinging like this is some sort of Eastern Western. You can seamlessly switch into gunplay whenever you want and there's a handy sub-targeting system that allows you to **cripple limbs**.



This is Wei's way

Grab your partner dosey-doh...

Using cars as bike ramps rocks

VIEWING TO GET YOU IN THE MOOD

appreciate (or is that 'lament'?) the density of the city; both in the way a main street can suddenly constrict into an alley network - and the sheer amount of peds and vehicles getting about. Before we make a dog's breakfast of things, O'Connell quickly tells us that that we can pop a mono at any incoming civilian car and use it as an impromptu Evel Knievel ramp. We take his advice and get a good 10 metres worth of air off a Tuk-tuk. Honestly, it looked so cool and worked so well, we now think that it is a mechanic every sandbox game should feature. After some more skilful dodging - and some *Just Cause*-style stunt-jumps between vehicles - we end up carjacking the escaping Triad boss.

All right, we'll be the first to admit that leapfrogging from bike to car, or car to car probably isn't very true-to-life. But whereas the action in *True Crime* is exaggerated for the purposes of awesome, the plot and supporting characters will be anything but a caricature. Chatting more with United Front, they tell us that they have some inside sources - ex-Triad members in Hong Kong who have been contacted in an effort to keep the look and feel of their game authentic. In addition to this - and to get the other side of the story - United Front also spoke with the former head of the Organised Crime Bureau, who gave them real-life stories, some of which play out in the game. If that isn't enough meticulous research for you, United Front even told us that their Hong Kong discovery research will yield authentic strip clubs too. Such attention to detail is difficult to fault.

The team has also recreated some of the idiosyncrasies of the city's populace, including a reputation system called 'face' - which, apparently, is a social status system that threads its way through every facet of real-life Hong Kong culture. Face is the outward projection of your standing in society. Wear an Armani suit and drive a Bentley - you've got

face. Wear a Hessian bag and catch the bus for a living - you're essentially the Hong Kong equivalent of Skeletor. No face for you.

In *True Crime*, face works like this; you'll come across characters in the game world with several icons above their heads indicating how much 'face' or reputation you'll need in order to trigger conversational options with them. You will earn yourself more face the more you do missions - but it can also be destroyed. For example: should you be sprinting around busting out moves (or 'free-reigning', as it's known) and you try to leap over a chair rail - but miss the timing and badly rupture your junk - this would cause you to lose a chunk of face. And some sperm count, we'd imagine.

At its most basic level, face is just a goddamned popularity contest - but you're really going to want to stockpile your reputation in order to reap a vast bounty of rewards. The more face you have the more missions you get, it unlocks better combat moves and even lets you intimidate enemies a bit during a fight. O'Connell tells us that it's not going to be a mindless grind that interrupts your progression through the main storyline though. While all the side missions unlocked by face converge in some way to the main undercover missions, they are completely optional. Being given the option to either meander or blitz-through sounds pretty cool to us.

Something else which excites us is the considerable collection of game-creating talent United Front Games has rallied to its *True Crime* project. Over the course of three years they've cherry picked former employees from rival game developers who have had a stack of open-world game experience. These include some Rockstar guys who worked on *Bully*, ex-Radical Entertainment folk who crafted *Hulk: Ultimate Destruction* and *Prototype*, and even some former EA Black Box crew members who worked on *Need For*

Infernal Affairs (2002)

This Hong Kong crime-thriller film directed by Andrew Lau and Alan Mak tells the story of a police officer who infiltrates the Triads, and a police officer secretly working for the same gang. The Chinese title means "the non-stop path", a reference to Avici, the lowest level of hell in Buddhism. Deemed a success the film had two sequels and Martin Scorsese remade it in 2006 (and renamed it *The Departed*).

Triad Election (2007)

Jimmy, a 21st Century gangster with an M.B.A., wants to go clean by building a legitimate business empire. His profit-making enterprises make him a favourite in the upcoming Triad Chairman election, but he is also of interest to the Chinese authorities, who believe he could be turned into the perfect middleman. Taking its cues from *The Godfather* series, this a giddy mix of thrills and gunplay.



Obscure extreme sport #34: bullet limbo

Speed Most Wanted. That last acquisition definitely shines through when you experience the car-handling physics, take our word for it. According to O'Connell the average experience of the team is a whopping eight and a half years. Impressive.

With that sort of industry experience comes pedigree, and when you combine it with the winning formula of Hong Kong cinema meets the sandbox, you have an extremely solid base with which to build a smash hit game upon. *True Crime* is only in its early stages of life, but we sense an inordinate amount of positive chi radiating from it already. The only true crime about it; we couldn't bring it home with us. ▶

WORDS: DAVE KOZICKI

SCARE

There's nothing to fear, but *F.3.A.R.* itself

As we descended down the streets of San Francisco a palpable sense of terror began to take hold. Was it the plumes of steam emanating from the manhole covers indicating some supernatural oddity contained within the bowels of the city's sewers? Nope, that wasn't it. Perhaps it was the gaggles of geeks and programmers braving the outdoors for the first time in years to attend the GDC, brandishing their entry badges like Purple Hearts won in a long forgotten war. No, not that either. That's just weird, not particularly terrifying. We traversed down a dark hallway and went into an elevator, the hairs on the back of our neck standing on end. The door opened. A horrifying apparition appeared. It was Peter Molyneux. Literally. We slammed them shut, cursed the *Fable* franchise and pressed on. The air grew cold. We'd reached our destination. Our hearts were racing. Triple the tension. Triple the apprehension. Prepare yourself for triple the fear. Alma's back, and this time the gloves are off. In *F.3.A.R.* the whole world's gonna pay.

Before we get into our first look at

F.3.A.R. we thought we'd bring those of you who have yet to experience the series (shame on you!) up to speed. This is a spoiler zone, but considering both of these first-person shooters have been out for donkey's years, you've got no-one to blame but yourself if you haven't knocked them out by now. The acronym F.E.A.R. stands for First Encounter Assault Recon, and is the title of an elite military unit that targets threats of paranormal or supernatural origins.

SIBLING RIVALRY

Meet Paxton Fettel. Psychic warrior. Cannibal. Corpse.

He's the original *F.E.A.R.*'s antagonist, your baby brother and recipient of the golden headshot award by Point Man at its conclusion. Now he's more than haunting your dreams, he's haunting every single moment of your waking life. He's your living nightmare and co-op partner. You share the same mother, Alma, but what's his agenda? Will he aid you just to turn on you? Is this just some sick thrill? We asked, but Day

One is Johnny Tight Lips with the answer.



Taking on the mantle of non-descript soldier 'Point Man' in the first outing, you and your team have been called to neutralise a psychic-powered madman with cannibalistic tendencies – Paxton Fettel. Fettel has overrun an Armacham research facility with an army of cloned super-soldiers that he controls via a telepathic link. You'll soon discover that Armacham have been running all manner of genetic experiments, with Fettel the end result – as well as his obscenely powerful mother, Alma. As events come to a head, you deliver a coup-de-graces to Fettel and blow the crap out of the complex, barely surviving it yourself. Final scenes show Alma latching on to your escape chopper, neatly leading into the sequel.

Though primarily-focused on defeating Alma and limiting the devastation she leaves in her wake, *F.E.A.R. 2: Project Origin* was a slight departure from the original, featuring neither Fettel nor Point Man. Rather you play a Delta Force operator, Michael Becket. He may not be part of the same gene pool as the three main characters of the franchise but he does play a significant role in setting

up the third act. He enters the fray briefly before the cataclysmic destruction of the original *F.E.A.R.* unfolds, and finds himself cut from a similar mould as our psychically-gifted brothers. As he tries to contain Alma with the use of a psychic amplifier (long story, short), he's trapped within its confines with the very harbinger of doom he's trying to eradicate. As Becket fights off hallucinations and various ghost-like entities, he's vaguely conscious of Alma using his detached physical body as an amusement park for her own carnal delights and becomes the instrument to help her conceive a child of her own.

"So here we are at chapter three. Frank Rooke, director of design at WB Games, and our tour guide through the demo, begins to break it down.

"The *F.E.A.R.* franchise focuses on three main ideas," says Rooke. "The paranormal, close-quarters combat, and story. We're looking to evolve the genre with divergent co-op where each player harnesses very unique abilities."

We were confronted with two very



Just one more henchman who isn't going home to his hench-family

different looking screens in front of us. At first we thought that the TVs were on slightly out-of-whack settings, but Rooke told us a very different story. You see, the protagonist this time around is Point Man, who remains the focus of the single-player campaign, but to maximise replayability he's reluctantly partnered up with the ghost of his slain brother Paxton Fettel, who's spirit has somehow attached himself to Point Man and is tagging along for the ride. It should be noted that there'll be no AI bot version of Fettel accompanying you if you play it alone, thus giving a truly new and divergent co-operative experience with a mate.

"The opposing views are indicative of the new concept of co-op," explains Rooke. "You're playing with somebody you don't fully trust, with different goals and agendas."

Together, they're trying to track down their mother, Alma, who is very close to the birth of her child, and that has disastrous implications for all involved.

Alma and Becket's love-child represents a new evil, and events in F.E.A.R. take

place approximately nine months after the conclusion of *F.E.A.R. 2*. Only Fettel and Point Man have the necessary tools to take Alma on, hence the team-up. However, the differences between playing as Point Man and Fettel are immediately obvious. Point Man uses all the tricks of the trade that *F.E.A.R.* veterans would be used to. You'll see his extremities when he vaults over cover, he's a weapons maestro and he's got the ever-so-reliable and ever-so-addictive slow-mo ability – with his near superhuman reflexes allowing him to slow down time and deal a world of hurt to anything in the vicinity. But that's not all.

New skills to the series include slipping in and out of cover. While we've seen this before in the likes of *Killzone 2*, this interface is significantly less fidgety, mimicking something along the lines of the *Uncharted* mechanic. It seemed completely user-friendly. What really got us excited was the hint that the slow-mo ability would be upgradable in some capacity, though the developers are keeping their cards close to their chest on that one.

Fettel, as you'd expect, is an entirely different manner of beast. Being dead and all, he's got a very different perspective. His view was slightly tinged blood-red, and spectral wisps emanate off his body much like flames. Due to this distinction, he is able to see things that would be previously unobtainable to Point Man, which sometimes lead to alternate routes or weapons caches.

This point is a key component for replayability and, we've been assured, should make for a decidedly different gameplay experience the second time around. He's also got quite the mouth on him and loves to bait Point Man constantly, whispering and muttering in his ear. It's extremely unnerving, to say the least, to have a partner that you never really know



IF I WERE A CARPENTER

Adding a serious bit of horror weight to the writing staff is a new comic book kid on the block and a well-established veteran. We're talking about the creator of the graphic novel, now film, *30 Days of Night*'s Steve Niles and horror hall of famer, John Carpenter. Yes, that John Carpenter. The depth of either's involvement is sketchy at the moment to say the least, but considering the franchise's pedigree, any involvement is going to significantly add to the already spectacularly spooky experience. Let's just hope that we get something along the lines of John Carpenter's *Halloween* or *The Thing*, rather than *Escape from L.A.* or *Ghosts of Mars* – both horrifying films in their own right, for all the wrong reasons.



"Oh, nice work with the grenade launcher there... Chuck"

The Mask got old and crazy. Somebody stop him

Looks like someone cleaned up a CityRail carriage

Worst. Nosebleed. Ever



MUMMY DEAREST

Alma is not happy. Really, can you blame her? How would you feel if you were part of a genetic experiment run by your father, had your eldest child trying to kill you, only to watch him kill his brother instead? After torcibly having her wicked way with Michael Becket (*F.E.A.R. 2*'s protagonist) to sire a child, Alma's coming to term – and that spells a whole lot of trouble. Will her son stop her, or stand triumphantly by her side?

THE MAIN MAN

There's not much we know about Point Man. Hell, we don't even know his real name. What we do know is that he ventilated his baby bro's cranium at the end of *F.E.A.R.*, Alma's his mother (so psychic abilities are a given) and he's sporting a beard, so you just know he's a bad arse. In *F.3.A.R.* he's the lead, armed with slow-mo abilities and possessing a skillset that's the by-product of extensive genetic engineering. If he doesn't balk at taking out his brother and mother, heaven help anything else standing in his way.



F.E.A.R. FACTOR

The F.E.A.R. franchise does a damned good job of making manly men shriek like little girls. Only the awesome power of a beard and lots o' guns can protect you. Don't believe us? You do the math.



The Ring



Wolverine's Beard



Guns



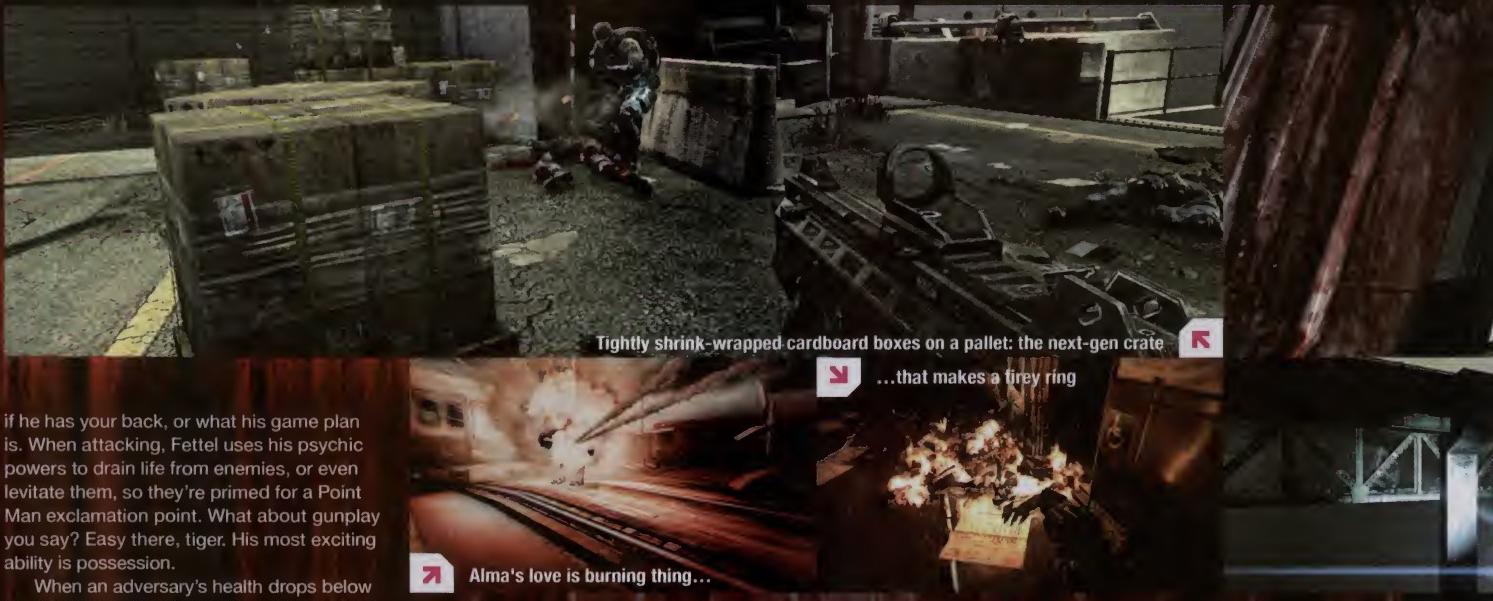
Bullet Time



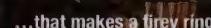
Scary shit



F.E.A.R.



Tightly shrink-wrapped cardboard boxes on a pallet: the next-gen crate



...that makes a fiery ring



Alma's love is burning thing...

if he has your back, or what his game plan is. When attacking, Fettel uses his psychic powers to drain life from enemies, or even levitate them, so they're primed for a Point Man exclamation point. What about gunplay you say? Easy there, tiger. His most exciting ability is possession.

When an adversary's health drops below a certain point, Fettel can choose to possess him for a predetermined amount of time and, though lacking the comfort of slow-mo (as he's not really alive), you can charge the enemy with reckless abandon – a point our guide was quick to illustrate.

"It's almost like once you've got control, you're a berserker, with a juiced up health bar, and can attack until the host is dead, or manually choose to end his existence," he says.

Oh yes. We like that. We like that, a lot!

Another staple of the series are the, "Oops, I just crapped my pants" moments, taking cues from Japanese horror flicks like *The Ring* and the general sense of tension and uncertainty that is part and parcel with the titles. In previous outings, these were scripted moments, designated to hit the right note at the right time. If you've experienced them once you'd know for next time. That's gone out the window, with these shock value moments now randomly generated to give you a terrifyingly, truly unique experience with each and every play through.

The demo begins with our heroes streaking across the horizon in one-man escape pods for an undetermined reason, approximately halfway through the game – so we were told. Fettel is whispering sweet nothings across the comms, trying to get in Point Man's head and laughing maniacally as he does so. After crash landing it's blatantly obvious the effects Alma's pregnancy has had on the immediate vicinity and the destruction that has engulfed the city. The sky is bleeding as a vortex appears amongst the clouds. Considering this is technically a pre-alpha build of the title, and a first look, it is still a particularly pretty game, utilising the brand spanking new Despair engine – built from the ground up specifically for this title. Hues of red, crimson and pink wash

the skyline delicately, and are quite a sight to behold. The devastation is apparent, with damage to almost everything in sight. Highways leading into town are smashed, train carriages litter the streets and everything is dishevelled and smattered with blood.

Freakish monstrosities accompany the more generic soldier boys as you and Fettel weave your way (with the remnants of your squad) through the smashed train compartments with some substantial helicopter air support. We're told that each contraction Alma experiences has an immediate and deliberate effect on your environment – almost like an outwardly expanding shock wave – and opens up a psychic rift, unleashing various manner of nasty little beasties. As Alma gets closer to the birth of her child, these will increase in both frequency and intensity, releasing hordes and hordes of abominable fiends of nature.

The testers worked quite well in tandem, playing extremely vocally – illustrating the need for constant communication to get the most out of the co-operative experience. Point Man would slip in and out of cover, with liberal use of slow-mo, and Fettel threw psychic blasts to whittle health down to a possession friendly level and then turn the soldier loose on his comrades. Dog-like creatures would burst from broken down carriages only to disintegrate into glowing piles of ash as you sent them back to Alma's arms. It was your stock standard F.E.A.R. fare until confronted by a new type of enemy: Phase Casters.

Phase Casters work just like a respawn point for enemies, with hounds of hell and soldiers bursting forth from their illuminated depths. As you'd expect, they can quickly

turn the tide of any skirmish, and we watched the guys rally to take a Phase Caster out. After levitating a few grunts for a quick takedown, Fettel flanked and possessed a high-perched sniper, then used his powerful rifle to take that mother down.

As the demo drew to a close, the guys had one more trick up their sleeve. Remember those pants-wettingly awesome mech suits from F.E.A.R. 2? You know, the ones that could level a city block with bursts of rockets and turn enemies into blood splatters on the sidewalk? Sure you do. Well they're back, though slightly modified. You're not quite as godlike and invincible in them as the previous version, but we dig the new balance. As Point Man commanded a suit

“Each contraction Alma experiences has an **immediate and **deliberate** effect on your environment”**

and began to wail on anything in sight, Alma sent some of her own to counter attack. As the scene degenerated into a firefight that'd leave stains on Michael Bay's trousers, Fettel took control of a soldier and, in turn, a shiny new mech. The boys then double teamed the last remaining mech and blew the living crap out of him in a hail of rockets and bullets.

F.E.A.R. is looking impressively solid for a late 2010 release. It handles superbly, has sumptuous graphics and a unique slant on co-op play. We've seen a little, we want a whole lot more. 



THE BRAINY



What do vacuum cleaners, teddy bears, and wheelchairs have in common? They're just a handful of items that'll save you from the world's worst love bite in the nest of neon, cash and the shuffling of the undead.

Welcome to *Dead Rising 2*.

WORDS: PAUL TAYLOR

Chuck Greene's in full swing – literally. He's hefted a fire axe above his head and brought it down on top of a former member of the gambling public, who's now more interesting in taking a bite of Chuck than trying his luck in Fortune City's Yucatan casino. The zombie peels in two, his meaty innards exposed like a freshly unwrapped can of Chum. Chuck's really carving it.

Behind him, though, a man is on a simultaneous path of destruction, spraying the undead crowd with an improvised flamethrower, crudely constructed from what looks like a Super Soaker and a spare can of petrol. It's another Chuck Greene. Dressed like Elvis in a white jump suit, with a green dealer's visor. This is the first impression we have of *Dead Rising 2*'s co-op mode, and behind the inherent silliness it is blissfully simple.

"For us it was a no-brainer," says Rob

BUNCH



Barrett, Blue Castle's president, on the decision to implement co-op into *Dead Rising 2*. "We wanted to do it from the start. The *Dead Rising* world is very rich, and the emergent gameplay is still happening for us. When our dev team plays they find sick and twisted ways to kill zombies as a team."

In single-player there is one Chuck, and in co-op there are two, identical, Chucks. The story doesn't change at all, and the world happily accommodates two protagonists. It is possible to play the game the whole way through in co-op, dropping in and out at will. The host owns the story progression but both players keep their Prestige Points – the equivalent of XP – clothes, weapons and any cash they find when they return to their single-player state. Smashing your way through the freak show is gratifying in single player, but in co-op it's a gag-fest.

"The *Dead Rising* zombies are toys,"

explains Barrett. "Unlike most games where zombies really are your primary threat and any one individual is a threat to you, it's a mob of toys for players in *Dead Rising 2*. They represent this base level of threat but as long as you're leveled up and you have food you're fine."

He has a point. There are hundreds and hundreds of zombies onscreen but they are mostly inert, sometimes shuffling by or even pushing a rogue wheelchair or food cart, echoing actions in their former lives. Get too close and they will lunge, but it's possible to skirt around them if you're running low on health. They're attracted to loud noises, flashing lights and meat; in a huge cluster they're just fodder, ripe for tearing down.

The key part of *Dead Rising* 2 that expands on the original is 'anything is a weapon'. Along with

MR. BIG

Never heard of Blue Castle Games? We're not surprised: its back catalogue up to this point includes three (moderately well-received) baseball videogames: a sport that has as much traction in Australia as a fat man in socks on a freshly waxed basketball court. However: "We always knew we wanted to do action games," said Barrett. It's an obtuse route to take, but we're confident we're going to see more of Blue Castle in the future.



LETHAL WEAPON

Anything's a weapon in *DR2*, but would you rather kick arse with a beach ball or a toy helicopter with knives for rotor blades? Thought so. Here are just some of the weapons that can be made.

I.E.D: nails + gas bottle

Tenderizer: MMA gloves + nails

Paddlesaw: chainsaw + canoe paddle

Boomstick: pitchfork + shotgun

Fountain Lizard: lizard mask + fountain sparkler

Drill bucket: drill + bucket

Molotov: beer + newspaper

Electric rake: car battery + rake

Gem blower: gems + leaf blower

Defiler: axe + sledge hammer

Air horn: traffic cone + spray can

Hail Mary: football + grenade

Snowball cannon: fire extinguisher + spitball gun

Dynameat: severed hand + dynamite

Fire spitter: water spitter + tiki torch

Freedom bear: bear + SMG

Flamethrower: spit ball gun + gas canister

Rocket launcher: fireworks + lead pipe

Exsanguinator: vacuum cleaner + saw blades

Blambow: bow + dynamite

Beer hat: beer + construction hat

Heliblade: toy helicopter + machete

Spiked bat: bat + nails

Power Guitar: guitar + amp

Knife Gloves: bowie knife + boxing gloves

Portamower: piece of wood + lawnmower



Stop. Hammertime

traditional firearms, axes, knives, baseball bats and so on, you can pick up stray signs, traffic cones, lead pipes, store mannequins, cash registers – anything that has a weapon symbol hovering above it can be used to deck a zombie. If it has a spanner icon then it's possible to not only use it on its own, but also combine it with something else in the world.

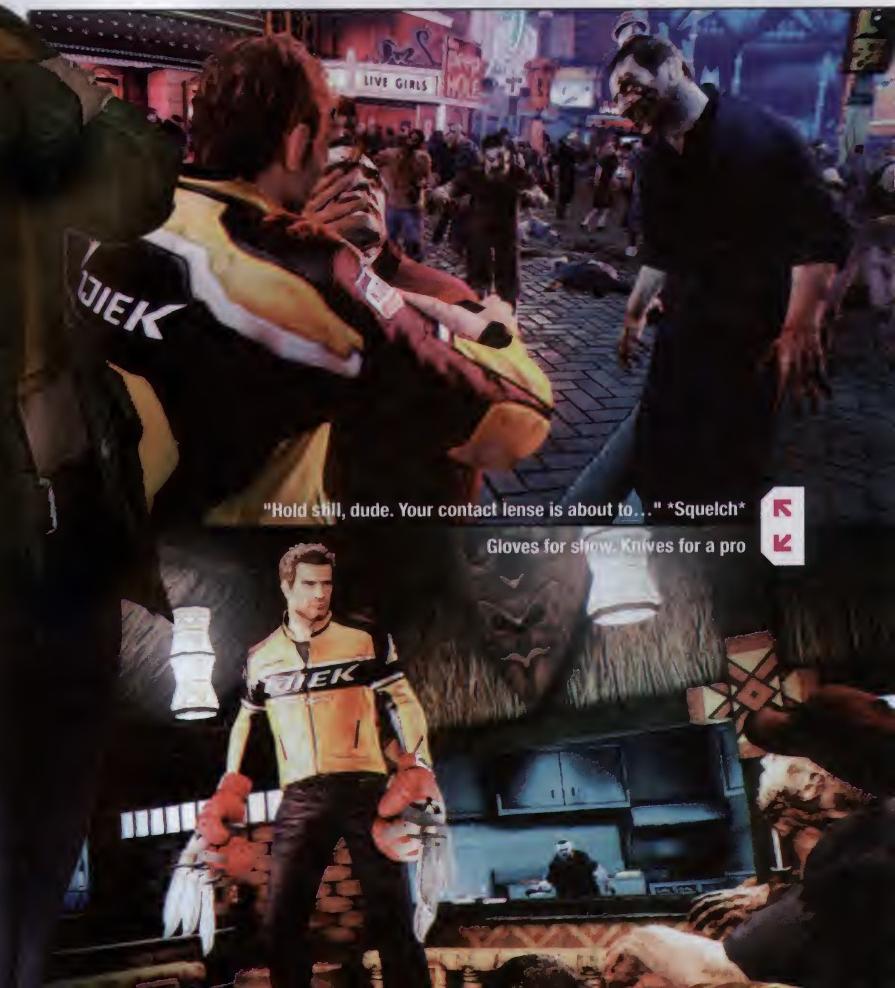
Knowing what to combine is sometimes as simple as having two items conveniently placed in a utility room, like a baseball bat and a box of nails, though most of your creations are accounted for by hidden 'combo cards' (see 'Lethal Weapon') and also glimpsing at movie posters that have outlandish weapons on them. The utility rooms dotted around the casino are the only places where you can combine items together, and as Chuck steps up to the bench to do his best impersonation of MacGyver, a heavy metal riff chugs over the top of the animation, and the camera changes perspective to focus on his face and. A few seconds later, he's wielding his latest creation.

Having two Chucks working cohesively has the potential to be as distracting as a trip across *Just Cause 2*'s landscape, with hundreds of ways to erase the brain-hungry population. Blue Castle demonstrated a fraction

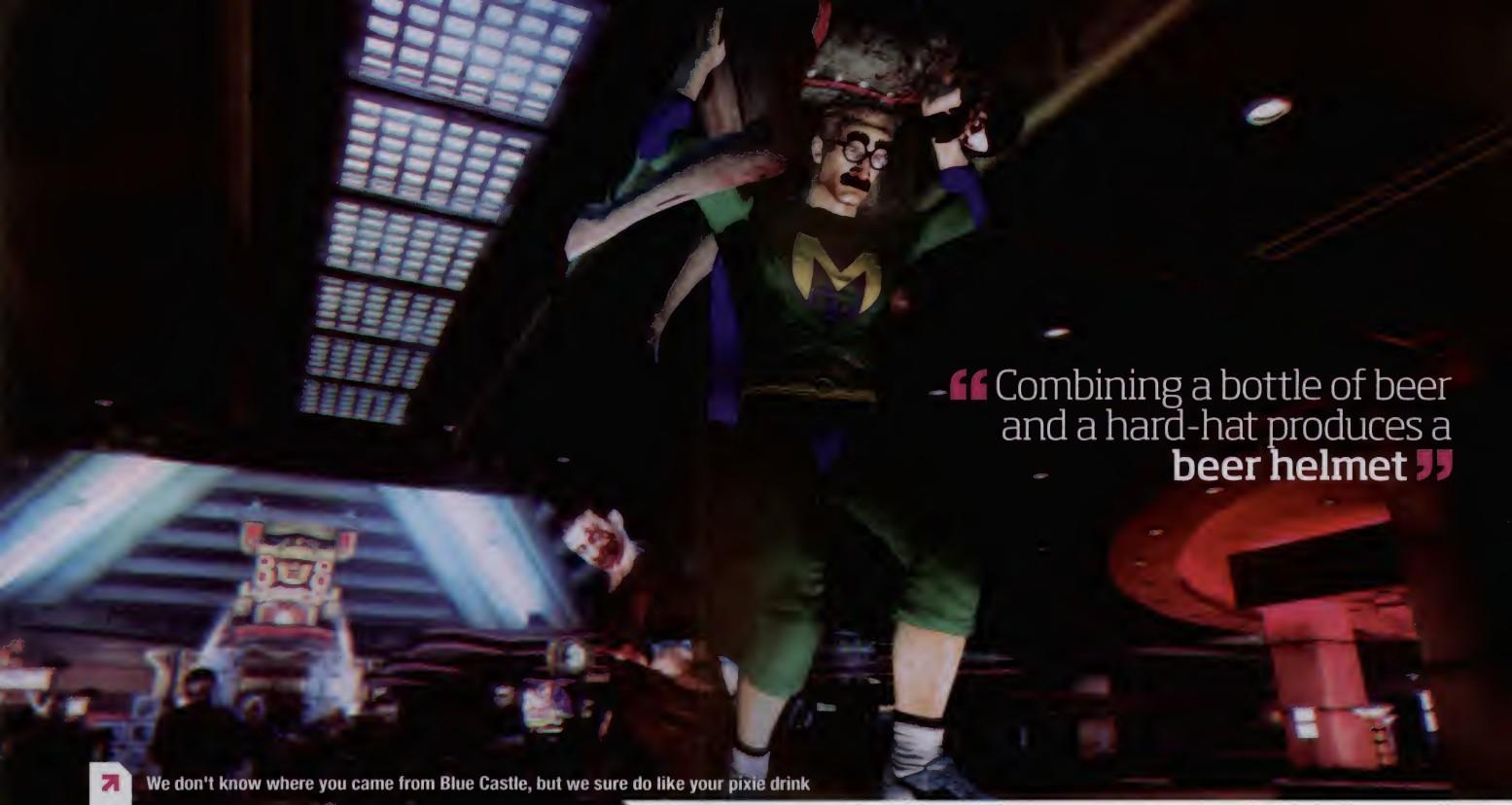
of the game's potential by freezing a zombie with a fire extinguisher, then smashing it to bits with a baseball bat. Launch a toy helicopter and the chopper will sound off a shrill alarm attracting the undead, leaving them vulnerable. One of the Chuck duo grabbed a barrel and thrust it over the top of a zombie, while the other capped it off with a comical demon mask.

It seems like a lot of work to just do that, and this zombie wasn't alone. Apart from giving off a few laughs, there didn't seem to be any other tangible reward as Prestige Points are only awarded for taking the 'un' out of 'undead'. "It's a tough thing to check for, humiliation," said Barrett. "[There are] base weapons that are funny but ineffective, but there are combo weapons that aren't necessarily massively destructive as they have other functions like luring or embarrassing.

"When we started we knew we wanted combo weapons and looked at different ways to handle it," Barrett tells us later. "In total, counting the combo weapons and the base weapons, we're close to 300 weapons in the game. So, you start allowing combinations and we realised people have 40,000 weapons that they can make if we let them. And then it comes down to quality; how many of those



Gloves for show. Knives for a pro



“Combining a bottle of beer and a hard-hat produces a beer helmet”

We don't know where you came from Blue Castle, but we sure do like your pixie drink

Is this the end of zombie Mike Tyson?



The Way Things Were

Chuck Greene has landed in Fortune City, a gambling paradise, to compete in a reality TV show titled “Terror is Reality”. The aim: to survive a series of arenas filled with zombies so that the former motocross champion can afford Zombrex, the medicine his daughter Kately needs to prevent her from turning into a zombie. Chuck’s no superhero. According to Rob Barrett, Chuck Greene is “a bit of the everyman. It was important to Capcom that the main character isn’t a cop or fireman because it implies that person has responsibilities: they should be saving survivors and stuff like that, but they wanted to be the everyman [who could say] ‘ah let that person who’s stranded on top of that, forget about them’. The character had to be free enough so people didn’t feel like they had to play a certain way.”

would be effective and good, and that’s the part where we realised that if we allowed that we might just be frustrating the players if, let’s say, there’s 100 good weapons out of 40,000. Outside of that 100 it’s frustration, and we wanted to make it a very controlled experience. We’ve already put the thought into the absurd, the combo weapons themselves; there needs to be a blend of completely humorous weapons, devastating weapons, luring weapons. We want to maintain a good balance as well so that’s why there’s a more deliberate list.”

The underlying point is that zombies are toys and a substantial amount of gratification comes from experimenting on and with them. While Blue Castle and Capcom are quick to highlight the importance of *Dead Rising 2*’s story (see ‘The Way Things Were’), the most impressive parts of the game are the procedural cutting – where you hit, cut or shoot a zombie matter as that particular body part will be affected – the flexibility in taking down opponents and the laugh-out-loud humour. It’s inescapable, infused in the outrageous costumes, ridiculous weapons, and the Tarantino-esque amounts of blood and violence.

An example. At one point our baseball bat reached the end of its life and disintegrated, while our partner was busy

decimating a throng with his dynamite/bow hybrid, the Blambow. All that we had close by was a handbag that we tossed at a portly gent, only for a foot-long, curved purple ‘massager’ to fall out. Grabbing it we started to beat the zombie to death on our way back to the utility room where we lashed together a pair of boxing gloves and bowie knife to make a set of claws Wolverine would be happy to use. Back out on the casino floor we sliced our way through the crowd and quickly ended up covered in more red stuff than a toddler with an open jar of strawberry jam.

Not everything you make is designed for destruction. Combining a bottle of beer and a hard-hat produces a beer helmet that gives more health than just a swig of beer on its own, and also dishing out Prestige Points. Suck it down too much and Chuck will vomit, leaving a skeen of sick for zombies to slip on.

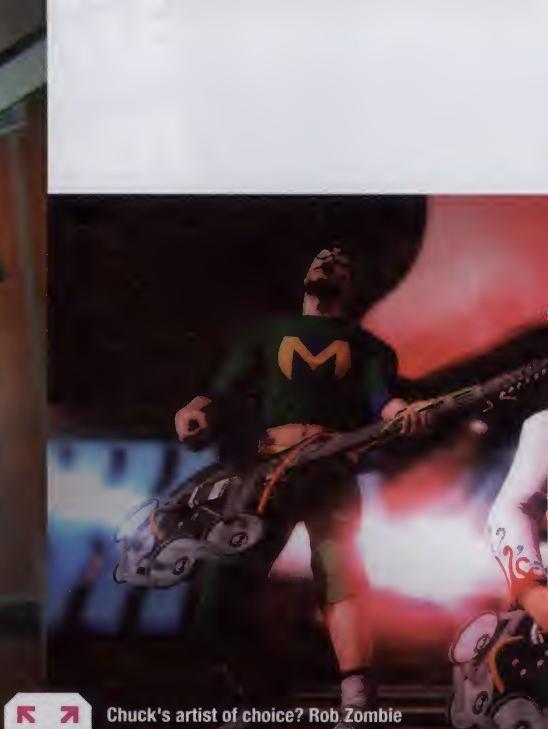


[SNIP]

Anything on the cutting room floor? “Lots of combo weapons,” says Barrett. “Two massagers on the end of a stick has been suggested many times so maybe we should go back and do that.”



The mighty paddlesaw will turn your head into a canoe



Chuck's artist of choice? Rob Zombie

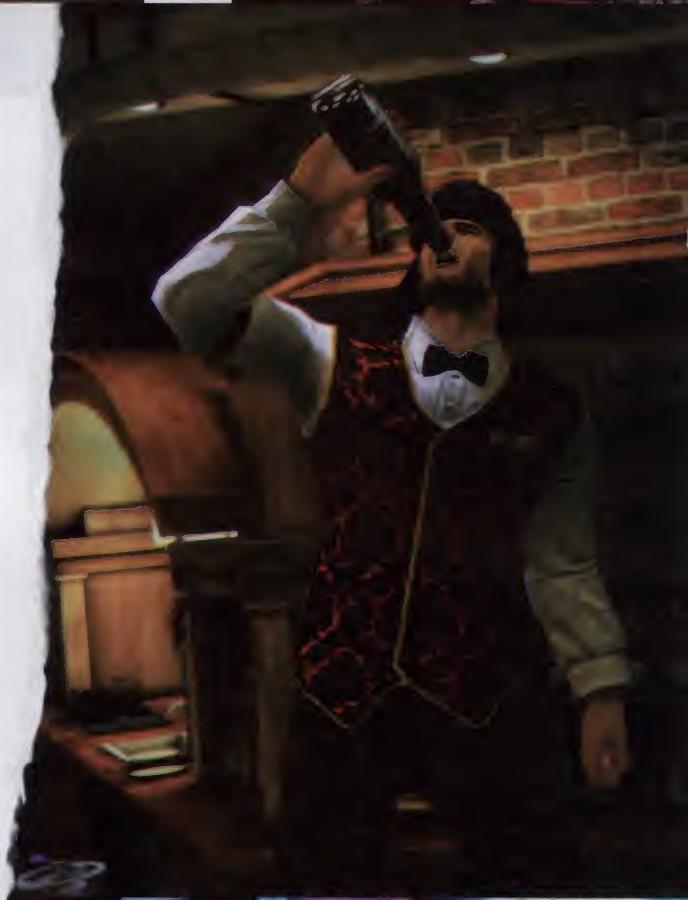
Once you're out of health in single player it's back to your last save game, but in co-op you have a limited amount of time for your partner to come to your rescue with a food item, be it a packet of chips or bottle of beer. The first game was maligned for its save system, whereby there was only one slot and you needed to find specific rooms with save points in them. "The sense of dread is really important to us," says Josh Bridge of Blue Castle. "We're looking to improve the save system, but that's all we can say at this point."

There's obviously some flexibility by playing the game in co-op, and the team decided to keep the co-op limited to the story mode. "We looked at making some very specific content for co-op and what we found was that it wasn't necessary," explains Barrett. "Even now when we play the game there are bosses that I struggle against that others don't, and some that they struggle with that I slaughter. You're always gonna have that variety of skill and aptitude with different players, so we found that we didn't have to create bottlenecks [to force people into playing co-op]; the bottlenecks are going to be in the people playing it. As far as zombies [are concerned], we don't increase the amount of zombies because there are tonnes of them. It's insane watching people taking 10 minutes to set up these massive devastations. It's more fun with two people [setting up an elaborate scheme] but you can do it by yourself."

Some of the fun stuff needs two players, like the giant draw-poker video game in the middle of one room. Trying to hold your cards and swat off a wandering set of teeth is tricky on your own, but with a foaled-up buddy close by it's a more enjoyable distraction. We're told cash plays an important role in the game, but beyond using it to gamble with and buy pre-made combo weapons from rogue pawn stores, Blue Castle is being very quiet.

Those familiar with the lore of *Dead Rising* can expect to see Psychopath - boss characters - reappear, as well as the Queen bee mechanic that accounts for the existence of the undead. Also peppered around the game world are survivors who need to be rescued. Taking on these (optional) rescue missions in co-op will be easier and quicker than going solo. "As long as it's the same part of the world you're in [that isn't separated by a loading screen] you can go off and 'tag-team' scoops [rescue missions]," says Bridge. "That's a huge thing for co-op: it's about time. The game's still on a [72 hour] clock, so how do we strategise getting the most amount of PP in the time we have? Two people are better than one, so [you could say] 'I'll go work at that scoop, you go work at that one and we'll get all our [survivors] together and save them.'

How this will come together is unknown to us, as we had a limited area that we were let loose on. Everything that Blue Castle promises



Costume drama

Throughout your travels in the Yucatan casino you'll find dozens of different costumes and clothes to make Chuck your own. No matter what you pick, he'll be wearing it in the cutscenes. We found a bright green superhero outfit, a pair of slightly too-tight cut off shorts with gingham crop top, as well as a variety of hats, masks, glasses and shoes. However, there's one costume we didn't see that we want to: a wide, brown suspender holding up a pair of olive green pants. So will we see a Mike Haggard costume in the game? "No," laughs Barrett, "He's not in there. But when you see the final game, we tried to make some homages to other Capcom characters, something subtle."





is heartily backed-up by the Japanese giant behind the original.

"The interaction Capcom has with Blue Castle Games is better than it's been before on any other project," said Keiji Inafune, the producer of *Dead Rising 2* and creator of the iconic *Mega Man*. "There's a shared respect as creators and we both have the same vision and understand each other, where we're both coming from. Blue Castle has nailed the Capcom nature of the game and it's a really awesome title."

"The biggest compliment we can get is that it feels like a Capcom game," said Barrett. But what makes a Capcom game distinctly Capcom? "That's a tough one," he admits. "Inafune had trouble describing that as well but

there's a quirkiness to it, there's that humour element but that's hard to say that's common in everything Capcom does. There's a 'feel' to the way the game handles – it's a lot of little things, and it just takes a while to get it all working."

Part of that spirit was already waiting before Blue Castle started on the project, as it was were able to use a chunk of the original as framework. "While the engine is all ours, as far as assets go, [we used] some of the animation from the zombies, because the zombies are the central part, the core of the game and we didn't want to go and mo-cap our own motions because no matter what we did they weren't going to come out the same. We wanted the same lunges and things like that. I think we borrowed a lot of main character animations of

[*Dead Rising's* Frank West] and applied them to our Chuck character and over time replaced them, so there's no Frank left in him. It was a template for us to make sure we were hitting the same quirkiness, the over-extension and some of the humour."

It's paying off. As we come to the close of our time with the two Chucks we lash together a lead pipe and a handful of fireworks. Weaving to the centre of a zombie mob behind our buddy who's knocking the undead down with his wheelchair we let loose. It's like a five-year old's version of New Year's Eve, as fireworks spew out in front of us. The crowd goes down amid explosions of pink, yellow and blue, and we can't help but feel behind our cackling it's fitting that we go out with a bang.

BUILD YOUR OWN BATHURST

Become King of the Mountain in *ModNation Racers*!

WORDS: LUKE REILLY

ModNation Racers has arrived in our office and we're completely smitten with it. Yes: it's *LittleBigPlanet* with karts – but in many ways it's even more of a hoot than Media Molecule's woollen wonder. Building your own race circuits is an incredible amount of fun and more addictive than anything you'd find in the cracks of Charlie Sheen's coffee table. You can make the process as easy

or as complex as you wish thanks to the extremely robust toolkit. You can lay a track down, bung in some hills and automatically populate it with objects and power-ups in a matter of minutes. But you can also spend a few hours crafting a total cracker. Our masterpiece is Mount Panorama – Australia's most-famous race circuit. Want to build one of your own? Just follow these steps.

STEP 1

You need to choose a theme and a spot for the start/finish line. We chose 'Alpine' because it was the best fit. Make sure you place the start/finish line up against one of the sides of the map – Bathurst is a pretty big circuit.

STEP 2

Lay your track. Don't worry about elevation at this point, and don't worry about making mistakes – you can rewind and re-lay track whenever you want. You want be able to create a 100% accurate recreation, but it'll be a good representation. See the pic for an idea of the course layout.

STEP 7

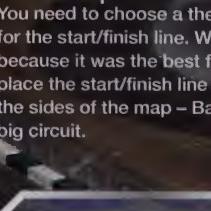
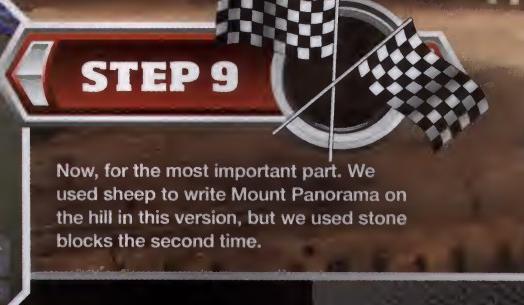
There are garages, grandstands, trucks, tents and many, many more objects to decorate your pit and fan areas. Go nuts. We created the dirt road with the gravel brush.

STEP 8

Don't forget you'll need plenty of trees...

STEP 9

Now, for the most important part. We used sheep to write Mount Panorama on the hill in this version, but we used stone blocks the second time.



STEP 3

Use horizontal shift to correct The Esses, and particularly Forrest's Elbow.



STEP 4

Use vertical shift to bring the mountain portion of the track up. Select everything from Griffin's Bend to Forrest's Elbow and lift it, then tweak it to suit. You can highlight uneven sections and smooth everything between.



STEP 6

Lay the sandtraps and surround them with fences and tyre walls. Now you can dress the circuit.

Mod Terrain



STEP 5

Use the flat hill brush to bring the landscape up around the track. Make it really big to start with to bring the whole surface up evenly, and then shrink it to pull up smaller chunks. Don't work it too much, because once it's too uneven and bumpy it's impossible to fix without starting again.

STEP 10

Race! If you want to tarnish this hallowed ground you could litter it with weapons and launch pads, but we didn't bother. Our custom-built jungle circuit carved into the side of a volcano shaped like Sarah Jessica Parker's nose, on the other hand...

MOUNTAIN
PRIDE RACEWAY



68

UFC

UNDISPUTED 2010

Hell ain't a bad place to be

REVIEW RATINGS



10 Incredible: Perfection is relative and elusive, and no game will ever be perfect. Our 10 doesn't mean a game is flawless, it means a game has done everything it set out to do in an amazing fashion and thus it deserves our highest possible praise.



9 Excellent: An outstanding game, either limited by its scope, sequel status (and lack of improvement) or a few minor blemishes from being a 10. Likely one of the very best in its genre, a 9 comes with high praise.



8 Great: Still well ahead of the pack in most departments, despite a few issues here and there. Thoroughly recommended.

7 Good: A robust package that does a solid job despite a bunch of moderate problems. Enjoyable in parts, just not fantastic overall.

6 Decent: This game will have some noticeable flaws that may make it hard to recommend to those who aren't fans of the genre, but it will do more right than it does wrong. Just.

5 Mediocre: A conceded pass, if you know what we mean. Half okay, but half-busted. Might scrape by for fans, but few will want to play a game that half sucks.

4 Poor: Anything below 5, strictly speaking, is a fail – but there are degrees of 'bad' just as there are degrees of 'good'. A 4 is unrefined, partially broken and poorly designed.

3 Very disappointing: Things start to go very wrong here – fundamentally flawed in many ways, boring and close to pointless.

THIS ISSUE

- 68** UFC Undisputed 2010
- 72** Lost Planet 2
- 74** Dead to Rights: Retribution
- 74** Split/Second
- 76** FIFA World Cup 2010
- 78** Prison Break: The Conspiracy
- 79** God of War Collection
- 79** Nier

WHAT WE'VE BEEN DOING THIS MONTH



- 50%** Punching faces off
- 30%** Winning the World Cup
- 15%** Mauling people to death
- 5%** Communal showering

2 Terrible: Virtually nothing good here at all, and definitely not worth the effort of removing the wrapper.

1 The worst: Reserved for the very worst gaming could ever offer. A broken, offensive mess without a single redeeming quality.



► The 'hump his leg like a dog' technique in all its glory

“Yuke's has rounded off some of the rougher edges of 2009”



WORSE THAN

HOT RINGSIDE BABES



BETTER THAN

FIGHT NIGHT ROUND 4



► “Ow, my arm! Quit it!” “No Lance, I just can't quit this elbow lock...or you”



"I swear man, your mum came onto me – not the other way around! Is this how you treat all your new dads?"

INFO

FORMAT: PS3 | **GENRE:** SPORT | **RELEASE:** MAY 27 | **DISTRIBUTOR:** THQ
DEVELOPER: YUKE'S FUTURE MEDIA CREATORS | **PLAYERS:** 1-2 | **RRP:** \$109.95

UFC UNDISPUTED 2010

Hungry? Try 2010's new knuckle sandwich

It's hard not to have sympathy with Yuke's quest to update this baby-chewing, hair-on-hair beast. Last year's *UFC Undisputed 2009*, the proverbial pound-for-pound 3D fighter of the year, was a rigid dichotomy – like Billy Ray Cyrus and success. On one hand it baffled with its nuanced control scheme that covered standing combat, ground war, and everything in between, yet managed to pack in the unpredictability Mixed Martial Arts (MMA) is notorious for – the flash knockouts, the blitzkrieg submissions. It was triumphantly both complex and volatile. How then to improve on something so balanced?

When jumping into *UFC Undisputed 2010* to engage in some greasy man-on-man nipple chaffing for the first time, proceedings look similar. The nicely textured player models from last year have returned brandishing newer pre-match animations and a banner pimping entourage. Ex-*Newsradio* mimbo and *Fear Factor* fuzz head, Joe Rogan, is back mouthing off at the commentary desk along with Mike Goldberg, as are the hot pieces of ring fluff. It's like slipping on an old glove.

It's when the first punches start flying that veterans of last year's title might feel a touch unfamiliar with the finer elements of million-dollar combat. While the controls are largely identical, Yuke's has rounded off some of the rougher edges of 2009 to the point where a visit to the bacteria-ridden training mat is a necessity. Small stuff has changed. And in *Undisputed*, small stuff can make the difference between getting out of a vice grip and being

pounded into puree. If you head into the dog eat dog world of UFC online before adjusting to the finer aspects of 2010 you will get kicked in the teeth, and you will go down. They will walk all over you like riff raff.

The most notable changes have gone into striking. In 2009 it was possible to throw a 4-hit volley of light punches and follow through with a haymaking chaser with teenage abandon. One's opponent could simply block, try for a clunky counter, or thrash back, creating a scenario that looked like two red roo's boxing on their tails. In 2010, on the other hand, players with skills smattered with radsauce have another option – they can move like a butterfly and use the new sway command to set up a goodnight counter. Feeling like it's straight out of EA's *Fight Night*, this is a handy little antidote for bomb throwing punch-a-lots with T.rex sized brains. It's also not liable to be excessively abused, as each of the four directions a fighter can sway in comes with benefits and drawbacks. Sway forward into a duck and one can dodge a hook but drop into an uppercut. Sway backwards and players can dodge a punch but also eat a head kick. And despite being handy against blows to the head, sways don't protect against leg kicks. This isn't a videogame – it's a science, people! Paper, scissors, rock, but with limbs.

Meanwhile the brazen effectiveness of grapple countering has been brought back to Earth. Last year OPS were particularly fond of countering with wrestling gurus before transitioning into a back busting slam and

then into ground and pound. That's no longer as easy. Now a standing grapple counter will only instigate what's called a strike grapple – which is nowhere near as frustrating to the poor sod on the receiving end.

The other combat improvements aren't quite as crunchy. Transitions – which refer to partial adjustments fighters make while whispering "sweet nothings" into each other's ears on the mat have been simplified. The cage can now be used to press opponents against for junkyard brawling, and players who work their way to the top mount can strive to "posture up" and bring down a reign of hammer blows. In practice, none of these improvements radically change the fighting experience all that much, but they do add a sprinkling of sugar to a sweet slice of biffo pie.

Unfortunately the submission system still sucks. It bites. Blows. Licks bag – whatever you want to call it, we can't (in the words of William Shatner) get behind it. At the risk of sounding puerile, IT'S JUST NOT FAIR. Or should we say, IT'S STILL NOT FAIR. In 2010 Yuke's have tried to make it work by removing the button mashing option and keeping stick rotation as the only submission technique (no doubt due to unsavoury online players with third-party turbo controllers). But it still doesn't wash. The worst case we experienced was while defending our Middleweight title. Using office fav Dan "Hendo" Henderson we'd cut





PAY-PER-VIEW IN THE HOUSE

Sick of limp-wristed unlockables in games? So are we. Fortunately 2010 has goodies to rival the Karate Kid's crane kick. First up, the game comes with videos of five UFC classic fights. We're not just talking a low-res montage, either. It's the whole legit, full screen shebang. There are also other unlockable videos players can score by smashing through the game's Ultimate Fights mode. All in all, bonuses you'll actually watch.

Stage 1: block cameraman's view. Stage 2: tear at genitals. Stage 3: profit



Now with 20% more man-sweat. Take that, Spartacus!

←

"That guy made me more aerodynamic"

→

through around 10 competitors when a vanilla flavoured competitor reversed a throw in the first minute of our fight and put on a submission move with ease. During the tussle we frantically spun the stick to break free. But it didn't matter. We lost. The fight – and our entire previous hour of play had been brought to a halt. We spent the next 20 minutes trying to dislodge the controller from the gyroock.

It's not as if players can level the balance by dishing out submissions either. We spent hours with Jiu Jitsu master Frank Mir trying to submit opponents, but rarely found success – even using 2010's new ability to switch submission positions on the fly. While we can swallow that, such uncertainty is part of the allure of MMA, it doesn't translate well into a videogame. Perhaps next year Yuke's might consider making submissions tougher to instigate and have their success be a little more justifiable?

The AI too is an interesting beast. Like with other sports games, from FIFA to NBA,

it often has a tough time working out a balance between impotency and Skynet-like omniscience. The Experienced, or normal setting, offers a guaranteed boost to testicular pride, with the computer rarely countering or attacking with gusto, while the Advanced option demands players study their opponent's fighting style and target a weakness. At one point we took on Internet terrier sensation Kimbo Slice. On the easier settings he was a push over, but on Advanced King Slice was an unstoppable fist-powered locomotive. We couldn't beat him – despite the fact he's one of the lowest ranked fighters in the Heavyweight class – until we started focusing solely on countering his wayward strikes. Which is great – it forces you to use both noggin' and knuckle. We just wish that at such higher levels the AI wouldn't counter every single throw or transition we put on. It's soul grinding.

Let's be frank though. You don't buy a game like *UFC Undisputed 2010* to fight the gremlins hiding in the bonnet of your PS3. Nor to climb through the game's generic Career mode that, as usual, sees you start as a whelp fighting to boost your attributes. No, there's only one reason why you'd pick up this gem. You buy it to beat up your friends.

While its complexities mean its not pick-up-and-play candy, taking on buddies who have some rough understanding of how to play is a hoot royale with cheese. It also mitigates the game's only combat shortcoming, as losing to a submission from a buddy is more of a laugh than losing to the AI in the final of a two-hour tournament. Noting this, the seers at Yuke's have expanded the online multiplayer options so a group of friends can form their very own fight club and train together.

UFC Undisputed 2010 may not have made leaps and bounds over its already excellent predecessor, but it is a straight jab in the right direction. If you're a UFC mad dog keen to start your own fight camp, start frothing at the mouth. If you're only a casual fan of the series then you may want to wait for next year's update to upgrade. One thing is for sure however, EA's unproven MMA challenger is entering the ring against a hardened brawler. After playing this solid sequel, we know who the favourite is. → James Ellis

FINAL SAY:

PRESENTATION

Blood and balls combine to form an effigy of sweating man-on-man action. The broadcast-style pre- and post-fight presentation is spot-on.

SOUND

Some of the commentary was recycled from last year, but it still works to create a warzone environment.

CONTROLS

The new sway and posture up additions are a treat, but the submission system is a tap out.

REPLAY VALUE

You'll be pulling this out every time a friend pops around.

VERDICT: The new undisputed baron of sports fighting, though its improvements aren't that radical.

8



FEDOR, IS THAT YOU?

A new year, a new roster, right? Well, the world of MMA doesn't chop and change like European football. A lot of the favourites from 2009 are still here, including cover juggernaut Brock Lesnar, Anderson Silva, Georges St Pierre, Chuck Liddell, B.J. Penn, and Forrest Griffin. Fortunately there is new talent, including classic fighters like Royce Gracie and Dan Severn. No Aussie content this year, but expect some for 2011 after the success of *UFC 110*. Funny enough in the Create-a-fighter mode Yuke's has allowed players to choose names from a preset of first and surnames – with a couple of clicks one can create a Mr. Fyodor Emelianenko – after the non-UFC heavyweight supremo set to feature in EA's MMA title.

REWARDING DVDS!



SHERLOCK HOLMES



DORIAN GRAY



THE FOURTH KIND



LORD OF THE RINGS TRILOGY



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“Finesse in the face of a hailstorm of Akrid bugs or rival players quickly goes out the window”

INFO

FORMAT: PS3 | GENRE: ACTION | RELEASE: NOW
DISTRIBUTOR: THQ | DEVELOPER: CAPCOM | PLAYERS: 1-16 | RRP: \$109.95

LOST PLANET 2

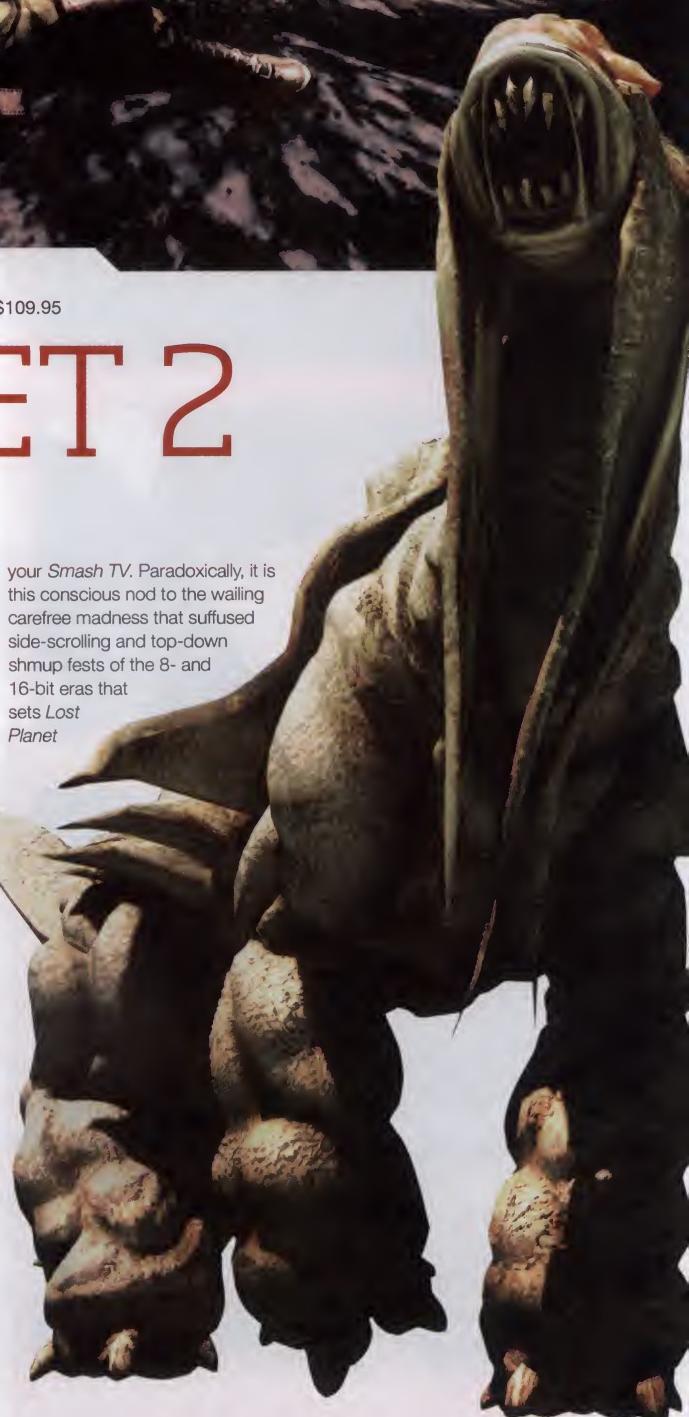
Less chilly with an extra serve of silly

No-one really enjoys freezing their balls off, much less freezing to death. As a game mechanic, it fails doubly miserably – which is arguably why *Lost Planet: Extreme Condition* wasn't quite all it could have been. It had so many things that make you raise a quizzical single eyebrow in abject joy. Wanton gunfights, a repulsive alien threat straight out of *Starship Troopers*, a grappling hook (for swinging, don't you know), a hot babe undeniably attracted to your inherent manliness, ma-hoosive boss fights, comically terrible sci-fi fluff plotting... it was all there. And yet, for a lot of it, we found ourselves shivering over the futuristic equivalent of a bum's fireplace, warming our fingerless mittens when we

could've been killing things. Luckily, it's been ten years since humies first landed on E.D.N. III and it's since gone from unwelcoming snowy expanse to comfortably warm jungle playground. Why? Don't ask. The answer is silly. All you need to know is, it's time to party – and you don't even have to chuck on a parka.

While it's easy to bemoan the fact that seemingly every shooter to appear in the wake of *Uncharted* simply must feature an increasingly hackneyed cover system, here you'll really wish you had one. After all, there's always a ton of things – wreckage and the like that you'll end up ducking behind during extended firefights, but doing so requires you to constantly hold or fiddly toggle in and out crouch with the left analogue stick in. Even then you're not 'welded' to the object you're cowering behind as you would be with a more contemporary take on things. Subsequently, attempting to line up a target and fire back while still holding the farting left stick in without wobbling all over the place (and potentially out of cover) can be a real headache until you just end up throwing caution to the wind and come roaring out from behind that crispy shell of a formerly functioning tank, guns blazing. Not through choice, but through frustrated necessity. Odds are, you'll die horribly in a hail of gunfire. Curiously though, you won't end up caring that much. Why? Because this, like the original, is still a gloriously modern ode to the old-school shooters of yore; your *Contra*, your *Probotector*,

your *Smash TV*. Paradoxically, it is this conscious nod to the wailing carefree madness that suffused side-scrolling and top-down shmup fests of the 8- and 16-bit eras that sets *Lost Planet*



WORSE THAN

BATTLEFIELD 2: BAD COMPANY



BETTER THAN

LOST PLANET: EXTREME CONDITION



2 apart in the hyper-advanced, bit-less now. The only time your weapon ever stops firing is when you die, which you are supposed to – explosively, with any luck – and respawn right back into the thick of things with poo dripping from your grin. That said, here's where things also turn their many fiery heads firmly in the direction of a convention wholly embraced by console gamers only recently: multiplayer.

Ostensibly, *Lost Planet 2* has clearly been built with multiplayer in mind. As a single-player experience it is competent but slightly underwhelming, largely due to the fact that it follows the exploits of not just one but four canny Snow Pirates, of which you play only one. What's more, your Battle Gauge depletes every time you or one of your chums dies, and when it's entirely empty, it's well and truly game over. Leaving this kind of thing in the hands of an AI that's reasonable (but not always right on the ball) merely reinforces the fact that you're missing out on the full experience as intended. With three other mates ploughing alongside you against overwhelming tides of heavily-armed *Bionic Commando* refugees and ludicrously huge Akrid monstrosities, it becomes a much more engaging experience – especially when you get past the first chapter and into the hectic guts of things. Courageously (stupidly?) leaping onto the back of a giant Akrid, trudging through dense jungles in a clanking mechanoid while your comrades hang off the sides dispensing lead to their surroundings and hammering

© in frantic circle-jerk bids to activate the few-and-far-between Data Posts (which act as respawn points as well as refilling some of your Battle Gauge) are moments made that much better by the presence of screaming foreigners you've never met. Missions are short, made for widespread nuttiness over brief periods. It's a massive laugh, but not as much as getting stuck into 16-player competitive multiplayer. It's the

swathe of insane new vehicles that really do the trick here, with everything from sleds to tanks to Vital Suits that resemble huge stalking arachnids which can seat a handful of players turning the consistently fun maps into

Toby McCasker



smorgasbords of deathmatch destruction.

While twisting your aim in 90-degree increments via © and □ is still as superfluous as it was in the original – any kind of finesse in the face of a hailstorm of Akrid bugs or rival players quickly goes out the window in favour of manic spraying and praying. The occasional visual interruption from local fauna and the difficulty in manoeuvring while sprinting aside, the third-person perspective works well once you get used to it – and used to it you will get, provided you're equipped for multiplayer. If your PS3 shenanigans are generally a solo affair, however, there are definitely better options available to shooting-mad amongst you (isn't that everyone?). □ Toby McCasker



PIMP YOUR PIRATE

The further along you go and the more things you destroy, the more gear and skins you're going to accumulate with which to pimp out your Pirate. Our particular favourite is the buxom 'Carpetbagger' (oo-er!) warriress, whose firm buttocks are nicely accentuated at all times by the third-person perspective.

FINAL SAY:

PRESENTATION

Particularly crisp, but when an unassuming fern blocks your line of fire you will get upset.

SOUND

A silly story made sillier by vacuous voice-acting, but the meaty chunk of the minigun makes it all better.

CONTROLS

Occasionally fidgety when on the run and a cover system would've improved things immensely.

REPLAY VALUE

Very slim for solo players, but multiplayer buffs could potentially go on forever.

VERDICT: Retro carnage collides with new-school conventions. Chaotic giggles for those online.

7

Woollen winter wear is sooo last season, darling



INFO

FORMAT: PS3 | **GENRE:** ACTION | **RELEASE:** NOW | **DISTRIBUTOR:** NAMCO BANDAI
PARTNERS DEVELOPER: VOLATILE GAMES | **PLAYERS:** 1 | **RRP:** \$99.95

DEAD TO RIGHTS: RETRIBUTION

Sit Ubu, sit. Good dog



Shadow liked his meat pre-tenderised

Dead to Rights: Retribution is a reboot of last generation's cop and dog shooter of, more or less, the same name. It hasn't really come as far as you'd expect.

It's at its best when you're Shadow, when you're either skulking about behind armed thugs and tearing their throats out, or bounding up to them and 'fetching' their balls. Shadow's been a staple of the series since its inception, but this is the first time you can actually control him. Unfortunately, despite Shadow's ability to detect enemies through walls, these sections feel like an afterthought. They're few and far between, quite short, and Shadow only has a limited amount of moves. Halfway through Retribution you'll be wondering why Volatile didn't spend more time on the Shadow levels.

As far as gimmicks go, the ability to become what's basically a fury, four-legged velociraptor with a bottomless hunger for testisatchels is a good one. We actually wish he was the real star of the game, but as it stands Shadow is drastically under-utilised.

The bulk of the game casts you as Jack himself, so the majority of Retribution consists of competent but unremarkable third-person shooting and brawling. Jack will scoop up guns from fallen foes, discard them when they're empty, and leads with his fists when unarmed. It's basic, and you'll be often left without a weapon, but Retribution's enemies are universally stupid



Humpy, the inappropriately affectionate dog, strikes again

INFO

FORMAT: PS3 | **GENRE:** RACING | **RELEASE:** MAY | **DISTRIBUTOR:** THQ | **DEVELOPER:** BLACK ROCK STUDIOS | **PLAYERS:** 1-8 | **RRP:** \$99.95

SPLIT/SECOND

It's about time!

Living up to its name, Split/Second arrived at the last possible second to make it in time for this issue. We had to wedge it in here lest leave you hanging for another month.

Split/Second, from the makers of Pure, has been on our radar for some time. It's like Burnout crossed with Death Race, without guns. Is it any good? Yes. And no.

Split/Second does a lot well. The key component is the environmental destruction. Each track is littered with dangerous traps and shortcuts that can be triggered by you, or your AI opponents. An icon will tell you when a trap is coming up. Time it right and you'll wreck other cars and shoot ahead. Time it wrong and you'll wreck no one, or yourself.

Traps can range from exploding buses or rogue cranes to crash-landing aircraft or collapsing buildings. The results are generally spectacular (particularly the ones that alter the route of the track) and always satisfying.

Clever closed circuits are a refreshing change from endless open-world racers, and it has some cool modes. Survival (pass as many semi-trailers dropping explosive barrels as possible) and Demolition (trap-laden time trials against the CPU) get our thumbs up.



At this point, your pants are feeling the need to be pee'd



Fully-sick neons, brew

and are quite happy to opt to duke it out rather than simply shoot you with the loaded shotgun currently slung on their back.

Some of Retribution's ingredients are tastier than you'd expect. The Shadow levels, for instance. We like them a lot. The cinematics, while cobbled together from the '90s cop movie handbook, are more polished than most. If you were starving you could lick the dish clean and be satisfied. But it wouldn't taste like anything you hadn't eaten before. **Luke Reilly**

FINAL SAY:

PRESENTATION

Fairly workmanlike visuals; plain-looking levels and waves of repeating enemies.

SOUND

Nothing stood out in particular, but we have no real gripes. Above-average voice acting, despite the shonky script.

CONTROLS

Standard stuff, like Uncharted-lite. Jack's disarm move is hugely overpowered, and Shadow's moveset is disappointingly underdeveloped.

REPLAY VALUE

Assuming you're motivated to finish it, there'll be no real reason to play this more than once.

VERDICT: Fine, but doesn't do enough to stand out. Co-op, with one player as the dog, would've done it wonders.

6

What we disliked, however, was that Split/Second lacks the precision and speed we'd have liked. You don't quite get that knife-edge control of Burnout, or its incredible velocity. But it's not a gamebreaker, and it has plenty of other tricks to tempt you away from Burnout Paradise.

Split/Second hasn't usurped the arcade racing king, but this series debut signals it as a more than worthy adversary. **Luke Reilly**

FINAL SAY:

PRESENTATION

Slick menus and a clever HUD, but graphics whores will turn their noses up. Detail has taken a (sometimes significant) hit to cater for the on-track insanity.

SOUND

No real complaints, but there could've been more substance to the effects.

CONTROLS

The car handling is mostly decent, but we'd have liked it to be tighter and faster.

REPLAY VALUE

Unlike most racing games these days, Split/Second has splitscreen. Thankyou, Black Rock.

VERDICT: Doesn't quite recapture what made Burnout 3 so special, but it gets closer than most since.

8



FREE to join
to play

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INFO

FORMAT: PS3 | **GENRE:** SPORT | **RELEASE:** NOW | **DISTRIBUTOR:** EA
DEVELOPER: EA CANADA | **PLAYERS:** 1-7 | **RRP:** \$79.95

2010 FIFA WORLD CUP SOUTH AFRICA

The World Game. Now featuring The World

No surprises here: another World Cup, another opportunity for EA Sports to recycle its existing *FIFA* goings-on into a profitable, but entirely predictable, strain of pop gaming fever. Less about providing an expansive footballing buffet of content and more about being authentic Cup paraphernalia, it features no club leagues but instead focuses on guiding one's preferred international squad through qualification to a virtual World Cup Final.

So why not make it a golden piece of DLC? Like Capcom's reason for the full-bodied release of *Super Street Fighter IV*, there's too much new material here. For one, all 10 official stadiums, packed with confetti chucking fanatics, have been included, and secondly the list of world teams is far more exhaustive than that seen in *FIFA 10*. Players can try their hand at powering through the Italian backline with the likes of Afghanistan, The Cook Islands, or even Borat's Kazakhstan. As it stands scrolling through each of the 199 countries available – and listening to each one's national anthem – provides a cracking lesson in geography.

A bit of a history class is present too. The new Story of Qualifying mode offers players the opportunity to alter several huge footballing moments that occurred on the way to this year's

World Cup Final. The best example allows Irish lovers (or frog haters) to slip into the team boots of Ireland with minutes to go after Thierry Henry's nefarious handball. Re-writing history, in this case, is only two goals away.

Most attractive is the ability to enter an online version of the World Cup, butting heads against Kiwi's from across the Tasman with delusions of grandeur, directing Americans back to gridiron, or beating the British. Unfortunately – as any hardened Aussie *FIFA* fan will attest – the enjoyment of this sort of feature is entirely dependant on one's Internet connection and location in the globe. As usual, Europeans will milk much more joy from this feature than us.

Which leads to the final obvious question. How does this compare with *FIFA 10*? For die-hard fans, it doesn't. The ability to compete across several leagues, play as the top beef in Manager mode, purchase Live Season and Ultimate Team content, and build up one's Virtual Pro isn't present here. But fly-by-nighters caught up in the addictive hyperbole of the Cup, and who have only a transient interest in a boots-and-balls romp, could do a lot worse. It is, after all, the same *FIFA* brilliance – just shoehorned down into a lighter, market savvy package. **– James Ellis**

FROM THE SPOT

In keeping with the Knockout vibe, *2010 FIFA World Cup* has upped the pressure during penalties. A composition bar now makes scoring tougher depending on the situation, while goalies are better at blocking shots.

WORSE THAN

FIFA 10



BETTER THAN

FABIO GROSSO – SWINE!



FINAL SAY:

PRESENTATION

The same impressive visual elegance as *FIFA 10*, but with some festive World Cup flourishes.

SOUND

Solid commentary and a brand new – and fitting – mix of EA Trax brings South Africa to your PS3.

CONTROLS

Nothing to complain about here. A new two-button control scheme is even present for *FIFA* newbies.

REPLAY VALUE

After the hoopla of the World Cup is over this'll be subdued off for *FIFA 10*. Just as well it's not full-priced.

VERDICT: Familiar blissful football, but the bells and whistles of *FIFA 10* have been swapped out for the World Cup.

7

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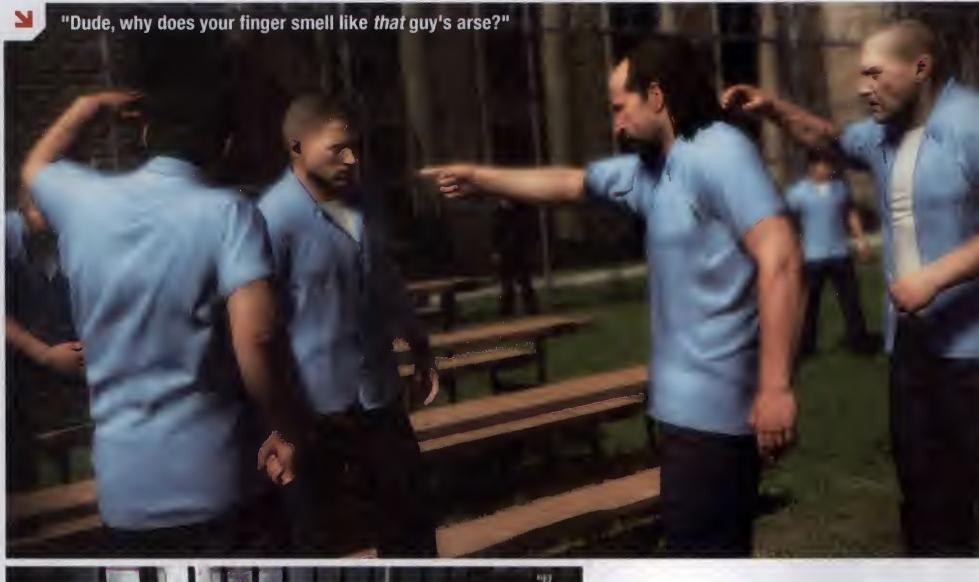
ON SALE NOW!

INFO

FORMAT: PS3 | **GENRE:** STEALTH/ACTION | **RELEASE:** NOW | **DISTRIBUTOR:** QVS
DEVELOPER: ZOOTFLY | **PLAYERS:** 1-2 | **RRP:** \$59.95

PRISON BREAK: THE CONSPIRACY

I am not a number! I am a free man!



SUPERJAIL

Sheriff Joe Arpaio of Maricopa County, Arizona is a dead-set legend. Under his watch, the Maricopa County Jail has re-introduced chain gangs, eliminated all luxuries (aside from the Disney Channel), and even forces prisoners to live in tents in the desert. Better yet: all inmates have to wear pink underwear. Not only is Arpaio's prison cheap to run, it's also effective — Maricopa County has one of the lowest recidivism rates in the US. It's almost as if the prisoners they release don't want to come back...

Remember how when Morgan Freeman got out of prison at the end of *The Shawshank Redemption*, his life behind bars had left him so ruled by routine that he was physically incapable of going to the toilet without permission? That's sort of what it's like to play *Prison Break*. You're ostensibly an autonomous CIA agent infiltrating a high security clink, free to pursue your objective as you see fit. Yet at every turn, there is only one course of action, one path ahead, and one way to succeed. This may have been a deliberate artistic statement about the crushing monotony of a convict's daily life, but either way, to play *Prison Break* is to become a prisoner yourself.

Cobbled together from middleware, the interface fits the action about as well as a cheap orange jumpsuit. Game tasks consist primarily of fetch quests, structured into simplistic stealth sections and crudely implemented hand-to-hand combat.

If you're not spotted when sneaking around, AI characters will behave like robots, acting out precisely the same movements each time you approach a level. Thus the challenge is not to observe your surroundings and adapt

to them, but rather to memorise precisely the right course of action, dying and restarting as many times as necessary. While there are checkpoints, quitting within a chapter will render your progress up to that point null and void.

Sometimes, you get the impression that the developers are toying with you. At one point, you have to sneak through a basement chamber that is being slowly patrolled by a solitary guard. In this grim, monochrome space you encounter a desk, upon which a lamp shines on a bright red wrench. In any other game, that would be a subliminal hint that you can use it to brain the guard and make good your getaway. But not here. The wrench may as well be glued to the desk.

If you take a liking to the sluggish fight controls, you may wish to take advantage of the two-player versus mode you can access from the main menu.

If you've seen *The Wire*, or any other premium cable show where swearing comes as easy as breathing, the profanity-free conversations of *Prison Break* will seem quaint. This unrealistic dialogue is stark; far more jarring than the mediocre acting or the stilted movements of the character models. Yet the most unrealistic aspect of all is the way your character, agent Paxton, constantly narrates his actions into a tiny digital recorder, often within one or two metres of men who would shank him if they even suspected he was a narc.

Carrying around such a treasure trove of evidence that could only serve to incriminate oneself is suicidally thick. It's almost as if the game designers thought the idea of an internal monologue would be too sophisticated for their target audience — as though the typical *Prison Break* player would be unaccustomed to the act of, er, thinking.



WORSE THAN

THE SHAWSHANK REDEMPTION



BETTER THAN

ACTUAL PRISON



The upshot is that Paxton's recorded monologues lend some humour to an otherwise dry, lifeless experience. Upon gaining the means to break into the psych ward to steal some contraband insulin blockers, our hero remarks: "I've got the lockpick, so I'm ready to go after the PUGNAc for C-Note. Next stop: Crazy Town." That's not strictly true. You pull in to Crazy Town the moment you load the game disc.

This was an ambitious production, but it boils down to sluggish platforming and repetitive fetch quests. **James Cotte**

FINAL SAY:

PRESENTATION

The jail from the TV show is recreated in great detail. We managed to get stuck in walls, though.

SOUND

Audio cues add to the atmosphere of the stealth sections, but the voice acting is as flat as a Bravia.

CONTROLS

Fighting and movement both feel sluggish. Oh, and watch out: **4** makes you run, but it also skips cut scenes.

REPLAY VALUE

Nil. The die-and-restart approach to a strictly linear adventure will ensure you're over it very quickly.

VERDICT:

A below-average stealth adventure. Even for fans of the show, it's a rental at best.

4



INFO

FORMAT: PS3 | **GENRE:** ACTION | **RELEASE:** NOW | **DISTRIBUTOR:** SONY
DEVELOPER: BLUEPOINT GAMES | **PLAYERS:** 1 | **RRP:** \$59.95

GOD OF WAR COLLECTION

A real brutal legend



Its release makes perfect sense, even if it is a little late to arrive here in Aus compared to the United States. The third game in the trilogy – spoiler alert, it's very, very likely we won't see another *God of War* game – sold more than a million copies worldwide in the first week. That's sales of Japanese proportions. Collection swoops in to capitalise on the success of third game, packing two of the best PS2 games – actually, two of the best games ever – on one Blu-ray, remastered to 720p and running at 60 frames per second.

Technical jargon aside, *Collection* is a title that you ought to play even if you played *God of War* and *//* back in 2005 and 2007. You ought to play it so you can marvel at the technical achievement, and to see how the games have shaped so many of those we play today. It is a fine specimen of doing things right. Most importantly, you must play it because it's fun.

INFO

FORMAT: PS3 | **GENRE:** RPG | **RELEASE:** NOW | **DISTRIBUTOR:** UBISOFT | **DEVELOPER:** CAVIA | **PLAYERS:** 1 | **RRP:** \$109.95

NIER

You got action in my RPG



"No, thank you, I'm content with my Twelve Star Pork Sword"

Do you like swords, swearing and strapping men and women? You'd be mad not to. What about repetitive fetch quests, last-century graphics and loading screens that crop up as often as unfunny episodes of *Two and a Half Men* (is there any other kind)? Prepare to vomit.

Set in a universe where disease has ravaged the human race and creatures called 'shades' populate the landscape, this action-based RPG does more right than wrong. It gets a massive tick for booting turn-based battles in favour of real-time affairs. *Nier* has a great tone with an entertaining and, at times, laugh-out-loud script, especially once you find Grimoire Weiss, a sarcastic, pompous talking book that shoots spells from its pages. Lead character Nier is a gruff bastard with a heart of gold who looks and sounds like a cross between David Bowie and Thomas Hayden Church. Androgyny be damned.

The combat system is simple but flexible with melee attacks on the sword and ranged spells mapped to shoulder buttons, though you'll spend most of your time using the latter. There's also a crafting system to improve your weaponry by either buying goods at your local market, or finding stuff out in the world or arenas and dungeons. Grinders will be especially pleased.

The main problem though is that, like Sega's RPG *Resonance of Fate*, it feels very undercooked. Some quests are truly banal, animations and graphics are rudimentary, and the voice acting is inconsistently implemented. It all sounds fine with more than passable

As well as the graphical update, the only other change here is the inclusion of Trophies to add to your stash, if blissful gameplay and taking control of a iconic character isn't the only encouragement you need to put this in your PS3. Our only gripe is that the cutscenes haven't been remastered – it may be a small gripe but it does jar the experience as you segue from playing to watching. Despite this, our recommendation if you haven't already figured it out: get this as soon as possible. **Paul Taylor**

FINAL SAY:

PRESENTATION

Damned pretty, even if the games within are five and three years old. Runs like Usain Bolt: effortlessly and fast.

SOUND

Bold and brash with quiet moments when needed. We love the intense orchestral score.

CONTROLS

It's *God of War*, therefore well balanced with its two-button combat system, QTEs, puzzles, smashable baddies, and a fixed camera system.

REPLAY VALUE

As it's a remake that has no new content, you'd be forgiven for blasting through once only. But what a blast.

VERDICT: Age has not diminished its impact. Purchase immediately, whether you've played these or not.

9

actors but at times you'll be listening to a conversation but then have to suffer slabs of silent text. Production wise, there's little reason this couldn't have been on your PS2.

With a little patience and a lot of forgiveness you will have fun with *Nier* and it's very easy to get into, but there are far richer experiences elsewhere. **Paul Taylor**

FINAL SAY:

PRESENTATION

Clean graphics but lacking in detail, and no-one has an animated face outside of cut scenes. It's hardly pushing your PS3.

SOUND

Great voice acting and music that happily ambles. You're in it for the thrust and pull between the lead characters.

CONTROLS

One-button melee attack with management required for spells. You'll also have to (gasp) dodge and block.

REPLAY VALUE

Once you've slogged through groan-worthy tasks it's unlikely you'll come back for more of the good stuff.

VERDICT: Despite being a fun diversion *Nier* needs a serious overhaul to bring it up to scratch with the PS3's latest.

7

INTERNET

ESSENTIAL DOWNLOADS

Download this...

Skate 3 demo



It's the third coming of a skating god, and now you can bring your mates along for the ride. Try it now!

Final Fight: Double Impact



The side-scrolling beat 'em up that started our (platonic) love affair with Mike Haggar. In HD. Swoon.

Oddworld: Abe's Oddysee



A PSone classic starring a farting alien. For less than \$9 you'd be mad to miss this classic. Mad, we say!

Ghost Recon: Future War Trailer



Although there's no gameplay this is a well-produced piece to get you in the mood for the upcoming game.

Sam and Max: The Penal Zone



A slab of old-school point and click adventuring with two charming characters. Plus, dick jokes.

DLC

HEAVY RAIN CHRONICLES EP1

There's more to unfold in this mystery

Set before the events of *Heavy Rain*, Episode 1, 'The Taxidermist', stars journalist Madison Paige. Madison is working on the Origami Killer story and thinks she may have tracked him down. Madison sneaks into a suspicious-looking house where things go awry.



Unfortunately, there's a different voice actor providing the speech for Madison in 'The Taxidermist' than the full game. This is a bit jarring, particularly for such a dialogue-heavy game. There's probably a good reason for this, but it doesn't make it any more palatable.

It's also important to note that it'll only take 15 or so minutes to knock this over. Seems a bit steep even if there are multiple endings.

VERDICT:

This really should've been the demo released before the game - it shows how good *Heavy Rain* can be despite the plodding start of the full game.

INFO

GENRE: ADVENTURE
RELEASE: NOW
DISTRIBUTOR: SONY
DEVELOPER: QUANTIC DREAM
PLAYERS: 1
RRP: \$6.95

DLC

ALIENS VS. PREDATOR SWARM MAP PACK

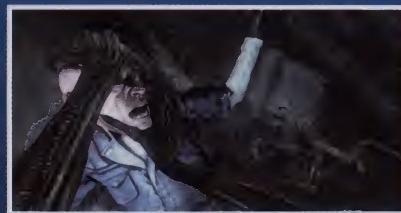
Coming out of the walls, again

INFO

GENRE: SHOOTER
RELEASE: NOW
DISTRIBUTOR: SEGA
DEVELOPER: REBELLION
PLAYERS: 1-18
RRP: \$9.95

Previously available only to the special edition versions of the game, the Swarm Map Pack contains four new locations - Outpost, Hive, Docks and Machine - for some inter-species chaos. Two of them are for the Survivor mode while the other two are for the remaining competitive multiplayer modes.

Survivor, where you play as a bunch of Marines trying to survive an onslaught of Aliens, always felt a bit 'light' upon release, so these two maps should be very welcome to owners of the standard version. They're pretty good to play on, too, and overall this pack is a must-buy for dedicated hunters.



VERDICT:

If you were getting tired of running over familiar ground in AvP's standard maps, you should have this already. One to check out if you're still keen on inter-species action.

DLC

DRAGON AGE: AWAKENING

Proving the fantasy wasn't final

INFO

GENRE: RPG
RELEASE: NOW
DISTRIBUTOR: EA
DEVELOPER: BIOWARE
PLAYERS: 1
RRP: \$59.95



DA: O, along with their loot, or start a brand new one as you re-tread familiar ground near Amaranthine and Vigil's Keep in a brand-new adventure.

Your dragon slayer is blessed with a bunch of new spells, character class specialisations, talents and even some new party members. There's a lot of variety packed into this, and while you can smash it in a couple of days you'll be missing out on a few excellent side quests.

VERDICT:

A massive expansion to a massive game. If you've reached *Awakening's* credits and instantly craved more, this is just the thing. Pity there's no disc, though.

MULTIPLAYER

GTAIV: EPISODES FROM LIBERTY CITY

Helicopters, motorbikes, parachutes and rock 'n roll

INFO

GENRE: ACTION
RELEASE: NOW
DISTRIBUTOR: ROCKSTAR
DEVELOPER: ROCKSTAR NORTH
PLAYERS: 1-16
RRP: \$69.95

The multiplayer on offer in *GTA: Episodes from Liberty City* is not dissimilar to what featured in *GTAIV*. There's just more of it.

The lion's share of new gear comes with *The Lost & Damned*. The *Road Rash* style checkpoint race that gives you a motorcycle and a bat is nice, and some of the other more complex matches are worthwhile diversions. 'Lone Wolf Biker' is a deadly game of tag, one against many, and 'Own the City' is a territory grab. The team with the most territory at the end of the time limit wins.

The best mode, however, is 'Chopper vs Chopper'. This helicopter vs motorcycle laugh-fest could just be the best two-player adversarial multiplayer we've ever experienced. The player on the ground must hit as many checkpoints as possible, and the player in the air needs to take them out. It's a riot. One minute you're buzzing down the road on your bike, the next you're darting into an alley as a row of exploding shells stitch their way across the busy intersection ahead of you. It's cat and mouse at its absolute finest.

Unfortunately, *The Ballad of Gay Tony* doesn't impress as readily. The addition of the APC and Buzzard, plus parachutes, is neat –



but we'll be buggered if we could find any of the latter in Free Mode. Why you don't just get one when you enter a helicopter is beyond us.

The lack of the 'Triathlon' races from the single-player (parachute, to boat, to car) is a massive oversight too. A damn shame.

**VERDICT:**

Some great new modes, like 'Chopper vs Chopper', let down by some dud decisions when it comes to *The Ballad of Gay Tony*. Works well despite some menu frustration.

BEST GAMES TO PLAY ONLINE

Enemy AI making you yawn? Feel like conquering the world? Take your skills online with this trio



BATTLEFIELD: BAD COMPANY 2
 You'll be won over by the chaotic destruction and storming in to an enemy base on the back of a quad bike. You'll stay for the tactics.



FIFA 10
 Shooters aren't the only games that need explicit tactics, and the beautiful game is quietly brilliant with 10 versus 10 matches.



BATTLEFIELD 1943
 Super-addictive and super-easy to drop in to a game. An example of doing things the simple way is sometimes the best.

11 THINGS TO DO IN...

JUST CAUSE 2

Why watch a movie when you can be in it? With the tools at your fingertips in this open-world action spectacular, there are heaps of scenes you can recreate: here's a bunch that admirably imitate some of the most – and least – iconic and action-packed films. We've also put together a video of each so you can check out how it all happens.

TRANSPORTER**THE SCENE: PARACHUTE ONTO A TRUCK**

Pretty easy, but super cool. Do as Frank Martin did: jump out of a plane, open your 'chute and land on a moving truck. One quick manoeuvre later and you're in the cabin and on the road again. As is the driver of the truck.

**DIE HARD 4.0****THE SCENE: KILLING A HELICOPTER WITH A CAR**

So this one's a bit of a cheat. Since you can't have someone fly a helicopter and then launch a car into it in mid-flight, you'll have to position the chopper somewhere convenient. One carjack later and the chopper was toast.

**BAD BOYS****THE SCENE: GO TO A STRIP CLUB**

Dead easy, this one, and it doesn't involve shooting anyone. Go to a strip club like Marcus Burnett and Mike Lowery and watch the 'dancers'. You'll have to cheat a bit and go to one in the sky on the east side of the map, but it's worth it.

**GOLDENEYE****THE SCENE: LEAP FROM A BIKE TO A PLANE**

We've spoken of this before and it's damned tricky. Go the aft of the zep, call for a bike and position it on the helipad. Jump to the plane, give it enough beans so that'll cascade off the edge, and grapple back to the bike. Good luck!

**SPEED****THE SCENE: EXPLODING BUS**

Take your pick of airports around the place, and get a bus on the runway. Before you do a few laps, strap some timed explosives to the bus then aim it at a jumbo. Floor it, jump out, and hold **L1** just before impact.

**THE ROCKETEER****THE SCENE: TAKING OFF WITH THE JETPACK**

We used to think jetpacks would make any game awesome. Then we played *Dark Void*. Still, make the skies yours by hooking onto a vertical-standing gas canister (hint: they're not barrels), and giving it just one bullet.



TROPHY HUNTER

Looking for gold, silver, and bronze in your favourite titles? Here are three to grab in *Just Cause 2*

**PARACHUTE CLIMBER**

Make gravity look stupid and fall up. The aim is to open your parachute land 300 metres above your first point of hooking on. You need a bit of momentum before you start, so grapple then open your 'chute on flat ground, grapple, grapple, then keep the left stick held back slightly as you approach a slope. Make sure you don't get too close to the ground and you'll be sweet.

THE HUNTED

THE SCENE: SHOOTING NINJAS

To clarify, this is the Christopher Lambert, 1995 flick, not the Tommy Lee Jones one. One Agency mission sees you accosted by ninjas: actual, stabbing ninjas. Riff on Paul Racine's escapades by eliminating them where it hurts: in the face.



TOP GUN

THE SCENE: FLIPPING THE BIRD

Do a Goose and Maverick. Get yourself to a military airport then jump in a jet. Hang back until you see another one taking off. Follow it and get yourself above to the right, then barrel-roll left. Hum the 'Top Gun Anthem' for maximum effect. Bird and Polaroid not included.



S.W.A.T.

THE SCENE: LANDING A BIZJET ON A BRIDGE

For maximum tension, we suggest doing this at night. Most authentic craft for the job is a small private jet. Warning: landing it at low speed is like trying to coax a block of ice along a razor blade. Cheaters can use any small military jet.



LAST ACTION HERO

THE SCENE: ELEVATOR ACTION

Pretty straight forward. Get yourself to the courtyard of the Three Kings hotel in the south-west corner of the map on the small islands down there, draw a bit of heat and then use your grapple hook on the bottom of an elevator to scarper.



THELMA AND LOUISE

THE SCENE: THE ENDING

Any car is fine, as long as it doesn't burst into flames before you reach the cliff edge. You'll need a Thelma to your Louise (grapple an enemy/civilian to your car) and wipe away a tear as your tires embrace the sweet nothingness below.



STUNT FLYER

Flaunt aeronautical safety laws and fly an airplane close to the ground for 30 seconds. You can't do it over water, either: it needs to be over terra firma. The landscape in Panau is fairly bumpy, but the distance you need to stay parallel to the ground is fairly forgiving. If you're struggling over tree tops, go out to the desert on the western side of the map and reduce your speed so you're covering less ground.

CAUSE AND EFFECT

It's not all just grapple and parachute. If you want to make it to 100 per cent completion, or at least make as much damage as possible and as quickly as possible, you're going to need our top five tips to have a mighty boom time.

1. Don't worry about completing the story line

This isn't to say 'don't bother finishing it', but rather don't worry about racking up Chaos to trigger the next Agency mission. There are tons and tons of things to do that will push the Chaos meter higher – like Faction missions, races, completing settlements – so just enjoy.

2. Spend those points

Check the black market dealer regularly to see how many vehicle and weapon parts you have, as it's pretty easy to have a bundle of them just sitting in the inventory. Upgrade the fragmentation grenades to their max capacity, then the SMG, then the grenade launcher (once unlocked) and finally the rocket launcher. Each becomes increasingly powerful and you'll be able to carry more ammo of each. Plus, the rocket launcher gets guided missiles.

3. Do the Faction strongholds

Complete them all and you'll not only unlock more missions to generate Chaos (see tip 1), but you'll also respawn at that base if you die when not on a mission. Most of the strongholds have a cache of weapons on hand, and they're also good for making your journey back to whatever you were doing a bit quicker. Of course, it also helps if you follow step 4 and...

4. Explore

When you're out in the open and not on a mission, you'll often find yourself dead and sometimes a bit of a distance away from wherever you were. Make the journey back to your destruction easier with the extraction option from the black market dealer. However, he'll only take you to places you've found, so hop in a plane – preferably a fast one so that you can outpace the SAMs – and scour the landscape at low altitude. You don't have to be on the ground to discover a settlement, just a little bit above it.

5. Stunt jump

Though it might seem mental to jump out of a car when you're being chased and fired upon, jumping on the roof of your vehicle always you to fire your grappling hook at your pursuers and tie them to a tree/stretch of road/other car. This ought to tug any chase cars straight off the road and give you some breathing space. Plus you can still steer your vehicle slightly even though you're on the roof, and you'll be able to jump and zip grapple to another motor fairly quickly. Handy when yours is more on fire than the centre of the sun.



DESTRUCTION FRENZY

You owe it to yourself to do this: destroy 30 objects in 60 seconds. Although blowing up Panauan property is going to increase your Chaos rating, the objet de destruction can be any structure that will tumble, crumble or explode. That means that vehicles and goons don't count, but neutral guard posts do. Make this personal with a toolset-up set of grenades and SMGs at any military base. Pro tip: keep running and watch your health.

ON

MISSION

NEW RELEASES ON DVD & BLU-RAY

SHUTTER ISLAND (MA15+)

DIRECTOR: MARTIN SCORSESE | CAST: LEONARDO DiCAPRIO, BEN KINGSLEY, MARK RUFFALO, MICHELLE WILLIAMS | AVAILABLE ON: DVD/BLU-RAY

IF YOU
LIKE THIS
TRY...

The Departed

Scorsese at his Oscar-winning best

It's 1954, and up-and-coming U.S. marshal Teddy Daniels is tasked to investigate the disappearance of a patient from Boston's Shutter Island Ashecliffe Hospital. He's wanted an assignment on the island for personal reasons for some time, but before long he begins to wonder if there's a more twisted reason why he was assigned there. With the hospital refusing to cooperate with the investigation, a hurricane cutting them off from the mainland and dangerous criminals loose in the confusion, Teddy begins to doubt everything - his memory, his partner, and his sanity.

VERDICT:

Neither Scorsese or DiCaprio are quite at their best here, but even sub-par Scorsese is still Scorsese. Decent, just not excellent.

7



INVICTUS (M)

DIRECTOR: CLINT EASTWOOD
CAST: MORGAN FREEMAN, MATT DAMON
AVAILABLE ON: DVD/BLU-RAY

Invictus follows the turbulent times of Nelson Mandela's release from prison through to the growing pains of resolving apartheid. With his newly appointed staff, we see conflict even between members of Mandela's own security, who have difficulties working with each other, though charged with the same task. This is reinforced after viewing a Springbok's rugby match, with the home team booed by its black supporters. Using this as a springboard, Mandela attempts to change to public opinion, focusing on the next World Cup, despite both the team and his cabinet's disapproval. Enlisting the help of the Springbok's captain, Francois Pienaar, together they take to the streets and gain local support. Not given a ghost of a chance in the World Cup – against the All Blacks no less – Hollywood couldn't have scripted a better ending.

VERDICT:

A solid and surprising film from the director's director, Clint Eastwood.

7

LAW ABIDING CITIZEN (MA15+)

DIRECTOR: F. GARY GRAY
CAST: JAMIE FOXX, GERARD BUTLER
AVAILABLE ON: DVD/BLU-RAY

Revenge is a dish best served cold. 10 years cold, apparently. After a decade of suffering injustice, brilliant inventor Clyde Shelton (Gerard Butler) decides to avenge his murdered wife and daughter by killing the perpetrators in the sneakiest, most brutal ways imaginable. But the low-life murderers are just the start; Clyde wants to destroy the entire legal system, including the under-handed, deal-making DA, Nick Rice (Jamie Foxx). Allowing himself to be arrested, Clyde gives Nick a half-confession and tells him that if he doesn't mend his ways anyone even remotely connected to his case will wind up dead. Though he is securely incarcerated, Clyde's threats soon become reality. Nick must foil the madman's plans before his own family is targeted.

VERDICT:

Quickly derails thanks to iffy acting and an absurdly far-fetched plot.

3

PREDATOR/PREDATOR 2 DOUBLE PACK (MA15+)

DIRECTORS: JOHN MCTIERNAN, STEPHEN HOPKINS
CAST: ARNOLD SCHWARZENEGGER, CARL WEATHERS, JESSE VENTURA, DANNY GLOVER, GARY BUSEY
AVAILABLE ON: BLU-RAY

The original is one of the greatest action movies of all time, and the sequel a tremendously underrated classic. Drawn to the heat of combat comes the near-invisible alien menace, the Predators. Whether taking down an elite special forces unit in the jungle or invading the urban sprawl of LA, they only seek worthy opponents, and take various body parts as trophies. This pack is worth it for the one-liners alone; from Arnie's, "If it bleeds, we can kill it", "Get to da choppaaaaaaal" or "The CIA got you pushing too many pencils?" to Jesse 'the sexual tyrannosaur' Ventura's "I ain't got time to bleed".

VERDICT:

The Blu-ray transfers on both are stunning and an absolute must-add to any collection.

9



THE WOLFMAN (MA15+)

DIRECTOR: JOE JOHNSTON

CAST: BENICIO DEL TORO, ANTHONY HOPKINS, EMILY BLUNT HUGO WEAVING

AVAILABLE ON: DVD/BLU-RAY

It's never a good sign when directors are chopped and changed throughout the filming of any motion picture. With release delayed and reshoots aplenty, many wondered if this remake would ever see the light of day. Building off the 1941 classic, this retelling is a humdrum affair to say the least. Lead Benicio del Toro plays Lawrence Talbot who returns home after a long stint abroad for his brother's funeral, and in doing so, gets accosted by a wolf-like entity. What follows is a second puberty, with hair growing in some really strange places. The so-called "twist", is hardly a twist at all, and whilst the film looks a treat and is bolstered by Hugo Weaving's performance as a Scotland Yard copper, it's still not enough to get this one over the line.

VERDICT:

Decidedly average and quite forgettable, the troubled production took a major toll.

5

TOMBSTONE (M)

DIRECTOR: GEORGE P. COSMATOS

CAST: KURT RUSSELL, VAL KILMER, SAM ELLIOTT, BILL Paxton, Powers Boothe, Michael Biehn

AVAILABLE ON: BLU-RAY

Standing in stark contrast to Kevin Costner's plodding biography of legendary lawdog Wyatt Earp; *Tombstone* is a rootin' tootin' western. Wyatt (Kurt Russell) and his brothers are forced from their quieter days of being entrepreneurs when they run afoul of local outlaws Curly Bill, the Clanton brothers and Johnny Ringo (the latter played by a suitably psychotic Michael Biehn). When regular words escalate into "fightin'" words; Wyatt – along with his dwindling supply of brothers, and the scene-stealing Doc Holliday (Val Kilmer) – opts to unleash hell and hot lead upon his enemies. There's also some sort of romance sub-plot in there too. Fortunately, it doesn't get in the way of the sweet gunfights and Doc Holliday's infinitely quotable one-liners.

VERDICT:

Has aged surprisingly well. Get to the shop and slap leather. You're a daisy if you do.

9

UP IN THE AIR (MA15+)

DIRECTOR: JASON REITMAN

CAST: GEORGE CLOONEY, VERA FARMIGA, ANNA KENDRICK JASON BATEMAN

AVAILABLE ON: DVD/BLU-RAY

Usually when we read the words 'Oscar nominated' appear in the title, we equate it to a bottle of sleeping pills, but this is far from the case here. We walk in the shoes of Ryan Bingham (Clooney) who works as a ruthless 'corporate downsizer' – or, in simpler terms – he fires people for a living. Clooney has his trademark smirk firmly planted on his dial and a twinkle in his eyes throughout, but there's a great deal of sadness behind those eyes. In his search for a carefree, "frequent flyer enhanced", unfettered lifestyle he has forsaken family, relationships and, in a sense, his own humanity. A seemingly random fling develops into something much more and has him questioning his ideals and focusing on making a change.

VERDICT:

A surprisingly heartfelt and restrained performance by Clooney. Must see.

9

BillyBluRay.com.au



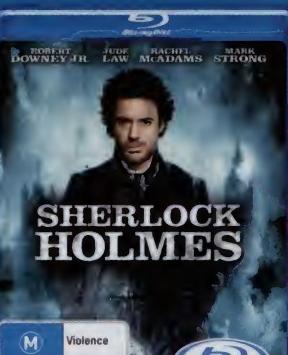
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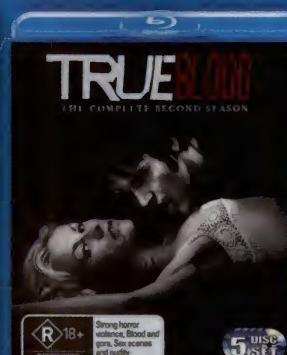


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INTERMISSION

NEW RELEASES ON DVD & BLU-RAY

DIRECTORS: VARIOUS | CAST: JEREMY CLARKSON, JAMES MAY, RICHARD HAMMOND AVAILABLE ON: DVD/BLU-RAY

TOP GEAR: 3 GREAT ADVENTURES - SOUTH AMERICA, ROMANIA AND BONNEVILLE, USA (TBC)

This is a great value set, with three great specials included. Jeremy, May and Hammond head to the US to take three American sports cars to the Bonneville salt flats and travel to Romania to find the world's greatest road. It's the Bolivia Special, however, that is the best. In this 76-minute special the team must travel 1,000 miles through from the rainforests of Bolivia to the Pacific coast of Chile, using pre-owned off-road vehicles, bought locally in Bolivia.

Hugely entertaining; we loved it so much we watched it again, one night later.

VERDICT:

We're prepared to say that the Bolivia Special is perhaps the best episode of *Top Gear* we've ever seen. Worth it for that alone. Perfect TV.

9

IF YOU
LIKE THIS
TRY...

Top Gear

The other adventure specials, like Vietnam or Botswana.



SOUTH PARK: THE COMPLETE NINTH SEASON (MA15+)

DIRECTORS: VARIOUS

CAST: TREY PARKER, MATT STONE, ISAAC HAYES

AVAILABLE ON: DVD

You only need one glimpse at the title of season nine's first episode to get a fair sense of what you're in for; 'Mr Garrison's Fancy New Vagina'. The patented *South Park* humour continues with 'Die, Hippie, Die!' (Cartman saves the town from a hippie onslaught), 'The Death of Eric Cartman' (Butters becomes the kid from *The Sixth Sense*) and 'Erection Day' (Jimmy must learn to control his hard-on reflex before making a big stage performance). But the pick of the litter has got to be the episode when card carrying ginger-hater Cartman catches the hideous disease known as Gingervitus (red hair, freckles and an unholy aversion to sunlight).

VERDICT:

Nine seasons in, this is still wildly entertaining and as fearless as ever.

8

VERDICT:

A solid season that ends with a well-orchestrated cliffhanger.

8

VERDICT:

Funny, but it's not a comedy. Plus, we're fairly sure Seagal believes he has super-powers.

5

NCIS - THE SIXTH SEASON (TBC)

DIRECTORS: VARIOUS

CAST: MARK HARMON, MICHAEL WEATHERLY, COTE DE PABLO, PAULEY PERRETTE, SEAN MURRAY, DAVID McCALLUM, ROCKY CARROLL

AVAILABLE ON: DVD

There's at least one crime show on every night these days, but *NCIS* remains more entertaining than most. Aside from always making it look like joining the US Navy is a perfect way to get murdered, *NCIS* mixes sharp writing with likeable characters, and it's a winning formula.

The sixth season introduces new *NCIS* Director Leon Vance and a handful of new characters, but by the end of the second episode, McGee, Ziva and Tony had returned to the team.

The two-part episode 'Legend' introduces the spin-off TV series *NCIS: Los Angeles*.

STEVEN SEAGAL: LAWMAN - THE COMPLETE SEASON 1 (PG)

DIRECTORS: VARIOUS

CAST: STEVEN SEAGAL

AVAILABLE ON: DVD

Lawman is a reality show you couldn't make up if you tried. Steven Seagal is a reserve deputy sheriff in Jefferson Parish, Louisiana. He has full police and arrest powers. And he thinks he's pretty awesome.

Once the unintended comedy wears off and you realise Seagal believes too much of his own bullshit it becomes tougher to watch. We imagine the people of Jefferson Parish hate this; we're assuming the place is now full of criminals who have migrated there for a chance to be arrested by Steven freaking Seagal.



IKKI TOUSEN DRAGON DESTINY VOL. 1 (TBC)

DIRECTOR: KOICHI OHATA

CAST: AHITOMI NABATAME, KEI SHINDOU, MAI KADOKAWA, MASUMI ASANO

AVAILABLE ON: DVD

This is not a series for turtle-neck-wearing sophisticates. You don't sit around in trendy cafes talking about the deep philosophical implications of a show about teenaged lady martial artists who let off rapid-fire high-kicks designed to reveal their pristine white (or striped) panties to the viewer. You don't write 50,000 academic theses about the way their boobs jiggle, or how rugged hand-to-hand combat tends to cut and bruise their skin, and rip off their clothes. This is not art — this is entertainment.

But we would've liked to see it all portrayed with higher quality animation. Nothing too fancy; something on the order of *Rosario+Vampire* would've been fine.

VERDICT:

Shamelessly exploitative girl-on-girl martial arts action, but the animation looks cheap.

6

PARADISE KISS COLLECTION (PG)

DIRECTOR: OSAMU KOBAYASHI

CAST: KENJI HAMADA, YU YAMADA, MARIKA MATSUMOTO

AVAILABLE ON: DVD

This anime is an adaptation of the popular manga by Ai Yazawa, the same artist who did *Nana*. It's the tale of a beautiful yet listless young woman who falls in with an impossibly stylish gaggle of fashion design students who run a label out of a disused hipster nightclub. Yukari's tale of personal development and adolescent romance is rendered with bold strokes and bright colours, with a supporting cast of flamboyant and perverted, if good-natured instigators.

The animation is by Madhouse, one of the best anime studios in the world, and while the actual story is as corny as anything, it is at least partially grounded in reality — Ms. Yazawa herself was a fashion school dropout. A word of warning: this is very much a show made by girls, for girls.

VERDICT:

One of the best shoujo anime shows we've ever seen.

8

SLAYERS REVOLUTION COLLECTION (PG)

DIRECTOR: TAKASHI WATANABE

CAST: MEGUMI HAYASHIBARA, YASUNORI MATSUMOTO

AVAILABLE ON: DVD

This parody of Dungeons & Dragons-style fantasy adventuring has been around in one form or another since 1989, and in that time nothing has changed. The rogue sorceress Lina Inverse and her chums look like they've escaped from the cut-scenes of a PSone game and been given a coat of Turtle Wax.

But if the visuals belong on the scrap heap, the gag humour belongs in a museum. The show only has one joke: Ms. Inverse is sensitive about her relatively small bust size, and will hurl fireballs at any disparaging remark about her figure. We're not saying sexism can't be funny, but after the 100th telling, a joke just isn't funny anymore.

VERDICT:

A retread of a retread of a retread. Only suitable for ironic entertainment purposes.

5

DIRECTOR: TENSAI OKAMURA | **CAST:** HIDENOBU KIUCHI, IKUYA SAWAKI, MISATO FUKUEN, MASARU IKEDA | **AVAILABLE ON:** DVD

DARKER THAN BLACK COLLECTION (TBC)

'Everyone Wears A Mask,' goes the tagline for this ambitious series, and it's an apt description. The setting is choice: a near-future world where dysfunctional super-powered dudes and dudettes — 'Contractors' — are the backbone of the espionage community. Like the X-Men, each has a specific power, be it teleportation, pyrokinesis, weather control, etc. But unlike the X-Men, each Contractor must also pay a price every time they use their power.

In the first episode, we meet a chap who can fly — but to do so, he has to break one of his own fingers. Ouch.

Running amok in this brave new underworld is Hei, a remorseless killer working for a shadowy group known only as 'The Syndicate.' A master of unarmed combat and infiltration, Hei can generate and control electricity (provided he's willing to gobble down a 10-course meal). On the surface, he seems like any other cold, sociopathic Contractor, but Hei has secrets, too — he's obsessed with tracking down his missing sister, and he won't let anyone, even the Syndicate, stand in his way.

For the first six episodes, it's a gripping ride. Each plotline is split across two episodes, allowing for meatier stories, and the content is very grim; part

Blade Runner, part *Callan*. The weirdness and the bleakness mesh perfectly. But after that, a couple of novelty comedy characters are introduced, the overall story arc slows down and becomes willfully opaque, and the quality of the animation drops noticeably. Don't expect a conclusion at the end, either — a follow up series has already aired in Japan.

VERDICT:

Not a bad series, but a tad disappointing. What starts off looking like one of the best anime shows of the decade turns out to be something else entirely.

7

IF YOU
LIKE THIS
TRY...

Blade Runner

Why not?

HARRY BROWN (TBC)

DIRECTOR: DANIEL BARBER | **CAST:** MICHAEL CAINE, EMILY MORTIMER | **IN CINEMAS:** MAY 20

Transformed from a humble servant of the caped crusader to crime-fighting pensioner, Michael Caine shows us you don't mess with a gent in a flat cap. Harry Brown (Caine) and his best mate, Leonard (Bradley), are tired of the violent drug-dealing hoods that terrorise their estate, passing the time by playing chess and drinking in the pub. When a gang member stabs Leonard to death, Harry jumps into action and decides to extol vengeance. Oh, by the way, Harry's a stone cold ex-Royal Marine.

If you've seen *Gran Turino* – and really, you should – and loved

it, you'll go nuts for *Harry Brown*. Like Clint Eastwood's flick, this is well paced though way more brutal and tense. Harry's environment is depressing, and the deep colours and sound design reinforce this, from the looming tower block to the melancholic silence in his flat, punctuated by dripping water, so there's no surprise he's not going to tolerate more scum in his pond. Caine is astonishing to watch, and his status as one of England's finest actors is upheld here as he methodically goes about his business and demolishes the hoods around him. Who said grandads aren't cool?

ALSO IN CINEMAS

HOT TUB TIME MACHINE (MA15+)

DIRECTOR: STEVE PINK
CAST: JOHN CUSACK, ROB CORDDRY

This follows a group of best friends who've become bored with their adult lives: Adam (John Cusack) has been dumped by his girlfriend; Lou (Rob Corddry) is a party guy who can't find the party; Nick's (Craig Robinson) wife controls his every move; and video game-obsessed Jacob (Clark Duke) is a shut-in. After a crazy night of drinking in a ski resort hot tub, the men wake up, heads pounding, in the year 1986. This is their chance to kick some past and change their futures – one will find a new love life, one will learn to stand up for himself with the ladies, one will find his mojo, and one will make sure he still actually exists.

THE LOSERS (TBA)

DIRECTOR: SYLVAIN WHITE
CAST: JEFFREY DEAN MORGAN, ZOE SALDANA, CHRIS EVANS, IDRIS ELBA

An adaptation of a comic called *Vertigo*, *The Losers* is about a team of mercenaries who wage war on the CIA after they're double-crossed in the field and left to die. Clay (Jeffrey Dean Morgan), Jensen (Chris Evans), Roque (Idris Elba), Pooch (Columbus Short), and Cougar (Oscar Jaenada) were on a black-ops mission in the Bolivian jungle when rogue CIA agent Max (Jason Patric) hung them out to dry. After surviving their ordeal, the team decides to strike back against Max even if it means sacrificing their own lives to do so. Aiding them on their treacherous suicide mission is sexy operative Aisha (Zoe Saldana), who has her own reasons for wanting to see Max go down. But getting him won't be easy; he's about to spark a war that could plunge the entire globe into chaos.

THE BUZZ

What's really going on behind the scenes



Whether you thought *Avatar* was a triumph of cinema or a very pretty version of *Pocahontas*, its sequel is as inevitable as *Modern Warfare 3*. In fact, it's in the bag two times over as James Cameron has expressed he wants to make *Avatar* into a trilogy. Part two of the blockbuster will explore the underwater world of Pandora, though he's also promising that we'll see more of the alien planet's rainforests.

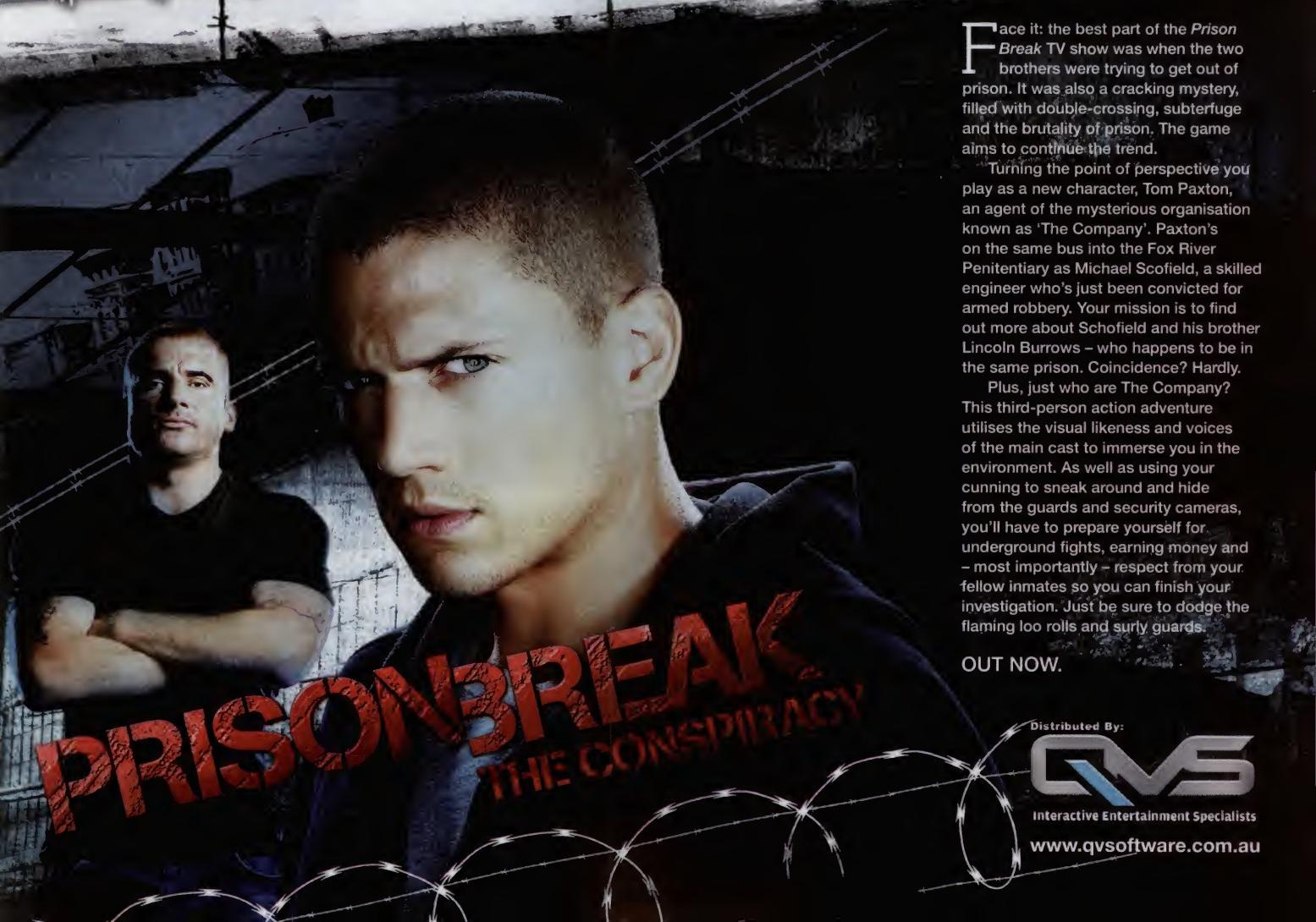
If you can't wait 'til the year 20 whenever to go back, an extended edition with an extra six minutes of footage has been planned – at this stage it's only confirmed for US cinemas but consider its success and the rocketing ascension of 3D movies, it's a logical assumption we'll see out here too.

From men made of metal to mental

men, Robert Downey, Jr. is rumoured to be taking up the role of Oz in *Oz the Great and Powerful*. The story revolves around Oz (the man) and his journey from being in a travelling circus to becoming a string-puller extraordinaire. This movie, to be directed by Sam Mendes, is one of 27 Oz projects kicking about the halls of Hollywood studios.



SHIVS NOT INCLUDED



PRISON BREAK
THE CONSPIRACY

Face it: the best part of the *Prison Break* TV show was when the two brothers were trying to get out of prison. It was also a cracking mystery, filled with double-crossing, subterfuge and the brutality of prison. The game aims to continue the trend.

Turning the point of perspective you play as a new character, Tom Paxton, an agent of the mysterious organisation known as 'The Company'. Paxton's on the same bus into the Fox River Penitentiary as Michael Scofield, a skilled engineer who's just been convicted for armed robbery. Your mission is to find out more about Scofield and his brother Lincoln Burrows – who happens to be in the same prison. Coincidence? Hardly.

Plus, just who are The Company? This third-person action adventure utilises the visual likeness and voices of the main cast to immerse you in the environment. As well as using your cunning to sneak around and hide from the guards and security cameras, you'll have to prepare yourself for underground fights, earning money and – most importantly – respect from your fellow inmates so you can finish your investigation. Just be sure to dodge the flaming loo rolls and surly guards.

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THE BEST PSN GAMES

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BRAID

DEVELOPER: Hothead

PLAYERS: 1



A charming platformer that incorporates one of last decade's most used mechanics – time manipulation – whilst wrapped up in gorgeous graphics. Incredibly addictive and charming as hell, it's made even better when you discover it was all made by one man. Buy it.

WIPEOUT HD

DEVELOPER: SCE

PLAYERS: 1-8



Yes, it's a HD remix of tracks from the PSP versions, but *HD* is too sublime to ignore. Utterly gorgeous, running at a blistering framerate and handles superbly. Mandatory. We may not a fully-fledged, dedicated PS3 version of the series for now, but this will do fine.

EVERYDAY SHOOTER

DEVELOPER: Queasy Games

PLAYERS: 1



Don't be fooled by the sparse art style. This cunningly blends music in with the action that turns it from a dual-stick shooting whimsy into a highly addictive blaster. It's very easy to lose hours and hours to this game as you strive to make it through the tough stages.

FLOWER

DEVELOPER: thatgamecompany

PLAYERS: 1



High concept and totally pretty, it plays like a dream. Guide petals on the wind using the motion-sensing of your DualShock 3. You will be amazed. More than one OPS staffer has lost sleep trapped in this game.

MARVEL VS CAPCOM 2

DEVELOPER: Capcom

PLAYERS: 1-2



It's by no means 'straight' Street Fighter, and nor should it. Stuffed with 56 characters, this three-on-three brawler is a visual and aural explosion. The HD treatment is superbly done. If you're a fighting nut, you should have this already.

BIONIC COMMANDO REARMED

DEVELOPER: GRIN

PLAYERS: 1



Bionic Commando *Rearmed* is a prime example of what many love about the PSN: being a platform for updates of classics. It's pure gameplay – and rock hard. We don't know why you'd bother playing the recent remake instead.

SIMPLY THE BEST...

The best of the best of the best of the best

ADVENTURE



GRAND THEFT AUTO IV

"*GTAIV* is a game 10 out of 10 was designed for – a game that takes your rising, constantly spiralling expectations and vapourises them with a product so sublime you'll tell your grandkids about it."

DEVELOPER: Rockstar North **PUBLISHER:** Rockstar **PLAYERS:** 1-16

10



UNCHARTED 2: AMONG THIEVES

"Easily the best PS3 exclusive to date, *Uncharted 2* combines genre-defining visuals, high adventure and cinematic intensity like nothing before. Don't miss the original either. Get both, this second."

DEVELOPER: Naughty Dog
PUBLISHER: Sony
PLAYERS: 1-12

10

BAYONETTA



"It takes balls to make a game this violent, sexy, and weird. It takes skill to make it so well, and it takes a Japanese mindset to make it so freakishly perverted. Smooth and stylish: the ultimate evolution of *Devil May Cry* style action."

DEVELOPER: Platinum Games
PUBLISHER: Sega
PLAYERS: 1

9



GOD OF WAR III

"Easily eclipses anything out there and reclaims its rightful place at the pinnacle of its genre. Believe the hyperbole. *God of War III* deserves an honoured place – both in your own personal collection and the mighty PlayStation Parthenon."

DEVELOPER: Santa Monica Studios **PUBLISHER:** Sony
PLAYERS: 1

10

HEAVY RAIN



"Kudos to Quantic Dream for continuing to evolve its unique brand of gameplay and storytelling. Compelling, different, addictive – *Heavy Rain* is all of these things. This game will appeal to gamers and non-gamers alike. We just need people to stop telling us it's a revolution."

DEVELOPER: Quantic Dream
PUBLISHER: Sony
PLAYERS: 1

8



JUST CAUSE 2

"Although there are a few technical shortcomings, *Just Cause 2* generates more fun per second than any other open-world title. So much better than the original, Avalanche has crafted one of the most exciting and entertaining open-world romps we've experienced in years."

DEVELOPER: Avalanche
PUBLISHER: Namco Bandai
PLAYERS: 1

9

SHOOTER



BORDERLANDS

"*Borderlands* starts out great and only gets better from there. It takes the best elements of RPGs and shooters and fuses them, and it's simply the most rewarding co-op to date."

DEVELOPER: Gearbox PUBLISHER: 2K PLAYERS: 1-4

9



KILLZONE 2

"Visually *Killzone 2* runs through the competition like a bull in the proverbial china shop. Lucky then, that the game's design and story matches the lofty production values. *Killzone 2* is the first-person shooter evolved."

DEVELOPER: Guerrilla
PUBLISHER: Sony
PLAYERS: 1-16

10

DEVELOPER: 2K Marin
PUBLISHER: 2K
PLAYERS: 1-10

8



MODERN WARFARE 2

"It's almost like three games in one, stuffed with moments that will leave you shocked and breathless with excitement. Superbly crafted, *MW2* is, with its older brother, a pinnacle of this generation's games."

DEVELOPER: Infinity Ward PUBLISHER: Activision PLAYERS: 1-18

10



IL-2 STURMOVIK: BIRDS OF PREY

"It's not an FPS, but shooting is all you do – in the skies above Europe. Head-turning attention to detail and intense action. Awesome, actually."

DEVELOPER: Gaijin Entertainment PUBLISHER: AIE PLAYERS: 1-16

9



ALIENS VS PREDATOR

"Possibly the greatest movie-inspired game ever. This positively oozes atmosphere and is a must for the fans. Wonderfully visualised, incredibly immersive and true to its inspiration."

DEVELOPER: Rebellion PUBLISHER: Sega
PLAYERS: 1-4

9



BATTLEFIELD: BAD COMPANY 2

"In almost every way *Bad Company 2* technically outclasses the original, but that's to be expected. We just miss the mischief. But maybe that's just us. Even still, this is a top-tier shooter that's more than up to the task of standing side-by-side with *MW2*."

DEVELOPER: DICE
PUBLISHER: EA
PLAYERS: 1-24

8



GHOST-BUSTERS

"Well-honed and accessible controls, some spectacular visual effects, excellent pace, great level design, incredible attention to detail – all of these essential traits combined with the *Ghostbusters* universe and come together for a thoroughly addictive experience."

DEVELOPER: Terminal Reality
PUBLISHER: Sony
PLAYERS: 1-4

9



MAG

"You will need to put some hours in before you get to unlock the best goodies, and it's the kind of game that requires fairly frequent attention, but the pay off is one of the singularly most compelling and captivating shooters to date."

DEVELOPER: Zipper Interactive
PUBLISHER: Sony
PLAYERS: 1-256

9

CHARACTERS WHO SHOULD BE LOCKED UP



SLY RACCOON

Wanted for: indecent exposure. He's a thief, and stealing things is illegal (especially if you're caught). However, he's frequently spotted wearing a shirt, gloves, hat, boots but no pants, all the time.



KING OF THE COSMOS

Wanted for: advocating terrorism. King's wiped the stars in the sky and is encouraging his son to roll up the Earth's inhabitants in a giant sticky ball so he can shoot them into space in order to replace the missing constellations. That ain't fly.



LARA CROFT

Wanted for: killing endangered and protected species. Throughout her years raiding tombs, Lara's also put a bullet into tigers, wolves, bears and, incredibly, a T.rex. Not many of those left, Lara.



PLAYER

Wanted for: flaunting anti-hoon laws. Those ads with people wiggling their pinkies were made for this guy as he joins LA's Midnight Club. That car? It's going to become a big, metal cube in one ticket's time.



JACK

Wanted for: being drunk and disorderly. Wine replenishes health in the utopia under the sea. Jack, however, over-medicates and ends up flourishing a mighty wrench, smashing private property. And skulls.

THE BEST PSP GAMES

Small system. Big games.

LITTLEBIG PLANET

DEVELOPER: SCE Cambridge
PUBLISHER: Sony
PLAYERS: 1



Retaining all of the fun of one of the PS3's most entertaining platformers, this version sacrifices little on the transition to the small screen. Incredibly deep, engaging – and fun.

MH: FREEDOM UNITE

DEVELOPER: Capcom
PUBLISHER: THQ
PLAYERS: 1-4



Monster Hunter is a system seller in native Japan, and it deserves that accolade here. It's an adventure game to lose your life to, and rewards in spades if you're able to put the effort in.

WIPEOUT PULSE

DEVELOPER: SCE Liverpool
PUBLISHER: Sony
PLAYERS: 1-8



Its predecessor, *Pulse*, laid the groundwork. It's not that this does much that differently, it just does it better. Beautifully animated and weighted just right, it's a futurist's dream come true.

GTA: CHINATOWN WARS

DEVELOPER: Rockstar Leeds
PUBLISHER: Rockstar
PLAYERS: 1



Hilarious. Violent. Addictive. Yes, it's a port of a DS title, but it's a port done right, and still it rebels against the style of other *GTA* games. A tightly scripted, mature and entertaining package.

MGS: PORTABLE OPS

DEVELOPER: Kojima Productions
PUBLISHER: Mindscape
PLAYERS: 1



As a chapter in an epic story that's kept PlayStation fans rapt for more than a decade, this is essential. As an adventure game in its own right, it's bliss. A fine action title, no matter what.

SOULCALIBUR

DEVELOPER: Namco Bandai
PUBLISHER: Ubisoft
PLAYERS: 1-2



Yes, it's even better than *Tekken*. Beautiful to look at and easy to pick up and play, it also has *God of War*'s Kratos as a playable character. Brimming with unlockables, it's a classic.

RACING



PURE

"*Pure* shot straight from nowhere to rub *MotorStorm*'s face in its glorious graphics and watertight gameplay. It's not as varied as its main competitor, but damn does it play well."

DEVELOPER: Black Rock **PUBLISHER:** Madman **PLAYERS:** 1-16

9



GRAN TURISMO 5: PROLOGUE

"An anemic game package that somehow survives by being what is quite possibly the greatest example of audio-visual excellence on the PlayStation 3 thus far. Well worth checking out."

DEVELOPER: Polyphony Digital
PUBLISHER: Sony
PLAYERS: 1-16

8

SEGA RALLY

"To appreciate *Sega Rally* you'll have to continually remind yourself that it's a deceptively life-like caricature of a hardcore rallying experience. Not brain surgery, but it delivers the fun in big muddy spades."

DEVELOPER: Sega Driving Studio **PUBLISHER:** Sega
PLAYERS: 1-6

9



COLIN MCRAE: DIRT

"*DiRT* 2 is snazzy, but it's too boneheaded for its own good, has few real rally cars and very little proper rallying. The original *DiRT* remains a far better example of a next gen rally game. More varied and far less US-centric."

DEVELOPER: Codemasters
PUBLISHER: Namco Bandai Partners
PLAYERS: 1-16

9

RACE DRIVER GRID

"This bastard rock n' roll son of *V8 Supercars* and *Colin McRae: DiRT* is hot. Your lower jaw will relax. Your eyelids will take five. And you'll start to drool. Shame it ditched its roots though, and the V8 DLC Codies promised has vanished."

DEVELOPER: Codemasters
PUBLISHER: Namco Bandai Partners
PLAYERS: 1-12

9

NEED FOR SPEED SHIFT

"*SHIFT* bucks the trend of all-American games, and treats you as an intelligent racer. Whether you want to get under the bonnet and tinker, or even just race with what you're given, this truly is a must-have package. It's also damn pretty and very, very noisy."

DEVELOPER: Black Box
PUBLISHER: EA
PLAYERS: 1-8

9



MOTORSTORM

"In our humble opinion *MotorStorm* was the best launch title on the fledgling PS3 – and arguably it's one of the greatest launch titles of all time. Defining next-gen racing as a platform upon which smart AI and terrain deformation could thrive, *MotorStorm* reinvented the arcade racer."

DEVELOPER: Evolution Studios
PUBLISHER: Sony
PLAYERS: 1-16

10



MIDNIGHT CLUB: LOS ANGELES

"Within its niche sub-genre, *MC: LA* reigns supreme. Well designed, rolling objectives, and an insane amount of customisation, *MC: LA* manages to rise above the rabble, easily beating off *Need for Speed Undercover* at its own game."

DEVELOPER: Rockstar San Diego
PUBLISHER: Rockstar
PLAYERS: 1-16

7



BURNOUT PARADISE

"You'll lament the thoughtless removal of splitscreen and the lack of a retry button, but you'll marvel at the slick frame rate, the sun drenched city, and Criterion's stellar commitment to free downloadable content. Awesome."

DEVELOPER: Criterion
PUBLISHER: EA
PLAYERS: 1-16

9

MUSIC & SPORTS



ROCK BAND 2

"Rock Band 2 is the best music game around. Import Rock Band and LEGO Rock Band to your hard drive, access the DLC, and you'll have over 1000 songs at your fingertips. You can't fault it."

DEVELOPER: Harmonix **PUBLISHER:** EA **PLAYERS:** 1-8

THE BEATLES: ROCK BAND

"From the tunes to screaming hordes of women to psychedelic trips through acid-fuelled imaginations, Harmonix nailed it all. A landmark collaboration."

DEVELOPER: Harmonix
PUBLISHER: EA
PLAYERS: 1-4

9

SKATE 2

"Despite some frame rate issues, SKATE 2 is undoubtedly one of the greatest sports games ever conceived. The controls are flawless, the city is dense, the balance is sublime. Massively addictive."

DEVELOPER: EA Black Box
PUBLISHER: EA
PLAYERS: 1-8

9



FIFA 10

"With its new momentum physics, stellar visuals, and engaging gameplay, 2009 was the year that the *FIFA* franchise managed to leap the perennial hurdle that is *Pro Evolution Soccer*. *FIFA 10* is even better. Buy it, become obsessed."

DEVELOPER: EA Canada
PUBLISHER: EA
PLAYERS: 1-20

9

10



FIGHT NIGHT ROUND 4

"A spectacular game. Deeper and more technical, *Fight Night Round 4* recreates the sweet science more faithfully than ever before. Remarkable detail, incredible animation."

DEVELOPER: EA Canada
PUBLISHER: EA
PLAYERS: 1-2

9



SUPER STREET FIGHTER IV

"With the 'vanilla' version's vibrant look, online mode and pristine gameplay but with a stack of new characters, all unlocked and at a bargain price, *SSFIV* belongs in everyone's collection."

DEVELOPER: Capcom **PUBLISHER:** THQ **PLAYERS:** 2-4

10

UFC 2009 UNDISPUTED

"It was trumped by *Fight Night Round 4*, but it's taken the arrival of *WWE SmackDown vs. Raw 2010* to remind us just how tight *UFC 2009* really is. A technical, rewarding fighter that looks bloody unreal."

DEVELOPER: Yuke's
DISTRIBUTOR: THQ
PLAYERS: 2-4

8

GUITAR HERO METALLICA

"*Guitar Hero Metallica* improves upon *GHWT* in a number of ways – a more user-friendly HUD, superior presentation and more attention to detail. Great tracklist too, including 'Tuesday's Gone' by Lynyrd Skynyrd."

DEVELOPER: Neversoft
DISTRIBUTOR: Activision
PLAYERS: 1-4

8

VIRTUA TENNIS 2009

"More of a tweak than a brand new experience, *Virtua Tennis 2009* is still the most enjoyable tennis game available today. Along with player creation tools, the biggest plus is the chance to play in the Davis Cup."

DEVELOPER: Sumo
DISTRIBUTOR: SEGA
PLAYERS: 1-4

8

DJ HERO

"A real surprise package, and tough to write off as a gimmick once you've played it. Utterly addictive, and great value when you consider it's chock full of great mixes you'll never hear anywhere else. An excellent game, and great for parties."

DEVELOPER: Freestyle Games
DISTRIBUTOR: Activision
PLAYERS: 1-2

9

MAGIC MOMENTS



GAME: Far Cry 2
CONSOLE: PlayStation 3
YEAR: 2008

THE MOMENT:

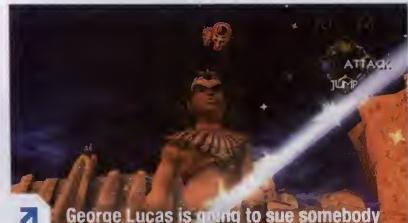
Name us the three things fire needs: three things to exist. If you said heat, fuel and oxygen, you're dead wrong. It needs a flamethrower, a nation being torn apart from the inside, and an itchy trigger finger.

Ubisoft's Africa wasn't created as a cheap digital sightseeing option – not that anyone without a pistol and a sound knowledge of repairing Jeeps would dare step into this world ruled by who waves the biggest stick (and who can hit the hardest). Mercenaries hunting for the Jackal, an arms dealer, weren't going to come across the cleanest or smoothest tools available.

Machetes were hunks of metal with chunks missing out of the pointy side. Guns left by deceased antagonists were prone to jamming. Most vehicles felt archaic, in terms of design and appearance.

The environment provided salvation but also damnation from the violent elements/variables. Lush vegetation was a perfect place to snipe from, as were tall rocks. Dried by the torturous sun, the savannah grass was a literal (virtual) tinderbox and being caught in a bushfire was a major bummer. Which brings us to the flamethrower.

It's an imprecise weapon, a perfect example of the crude nature of *Far Cry 2*. The fire ate up the delicious, crisp blades of grass like a toddler inhales fairy bread, spreading easily of its own will, raging indiscriminately towards trees, buildings and people. Directing your torrent towards a group of men with very large guns forced them around or would just cut them off allowing for a hurried retreat to re-strategise and recover. Or you could just keep squirting out the fuel in the baking heat until the gunfire stopped and all that was left was the pop and crackle of bark. Seeing it take off was breathtaking – and terrifying.



George Lucas is going to sue somebody



Grave robbing. Easier when you're dead



He's no pussy



2003

SPHINX AND THE CURSED MUMMY

Walk like a Egyptian

If you need a studio to turn your upcoming film or major sporting event into a playable videogame, chances are the crew at Eurocom will be able to squat down and pinch off something that'll do the job. *Pirates of the Caribbean: At World's End*, *G-Force*, *Ice Age 2: The Meltdown* and games for the Athens, Beijing and Vancouver Olympics – Eurocom has done all of them. The studio has been releasing up to three games a year for the past few years. But there is one diamond in its lengthy back-

catalogue worthy of grave robbing: *Sphinx and the Cursed Mummy*.

There are a handful of platforming pair-ups that remain remembered. This one isn't. If things had gone it's way though, it could have been – because it's quite good. *Sphinx* is a third-person action-adventure cut from the same bandages as most 3D platformers.

Sphinx, a half-man/half-lion demigod, has joined forces with the now-undead boy pharaoh Tutankhamen to restore order to their land. Or something. The story is thin. The fun comes from the quality of the gameplay.

The large worlds are filled with combat, puzzles and challenges. The combat is so-so, hampered by the fact you can't lock onto enemies, but we fondly remember some of the puzzles. The Mummy bore the brunt of most of the game's slapstick approach to puzzle solving, and in one area he was sliced into three by blades. You had to individually control each piece towards a key area to solve brainteaser. There were other instances where he had to be set on fire.

Well received by critics, *Sphinx* nonetheless never found an audience. There's at least one listless fan site kicking dust around, but

it's a deathly silent place. Eurocom has also deleted the *Sphinx* forum from its website. Set expectations of a sequel to nil.

It is a shame though – and more for the developers themselves than the small handful of people who bought the game. *Sphinx* was the only original game Eurocom developed last decade – from 2000 to 2009 – and it sank without a trace. If we had to pin down a reason for its commercial faceplant, we'd call debuting new platformer one month after *Jak II* was released a poor decision.

So rather than getting stuck into a series of *Sphinx* sequels the studio went straight back to work on a long list of film and TV tie-ins, summer and winter Olympics titles and follow-ups to properties from other studios. Eurocom hasn't made an original game since.

If that's not a kick in the plums we don't know what is. **Luke Reilly**



INFO

CONSOLE: PLAYSTATION 2
GENRE: ADVENTURE
DEVELOPER: EUROCOP
COUNTRY OF ORIGIN: ENGLAND
CURRENT APPROXIMATE PRICE: \$10 (EBAY)



SACRED CAT GOT YOUR TONGUE?

Sphinx and the Cursed Mummy didn't beat *Jak II* to shelves – but it looks as though they were trying to sneak out before it. *Sphinx* features absolutely zero voiceovers, a stunningly glaring omission when you note the characters in the game boast the facial animation to support it. Was voice work cut to get it out the door quicker, or was it planned that way from the get-go? It couldn't have been, with so much care taken elsewhere. Had the money run out, or did some coked-up suit bustle into the studio and turkey slap the project with a ridiculous new deadline?

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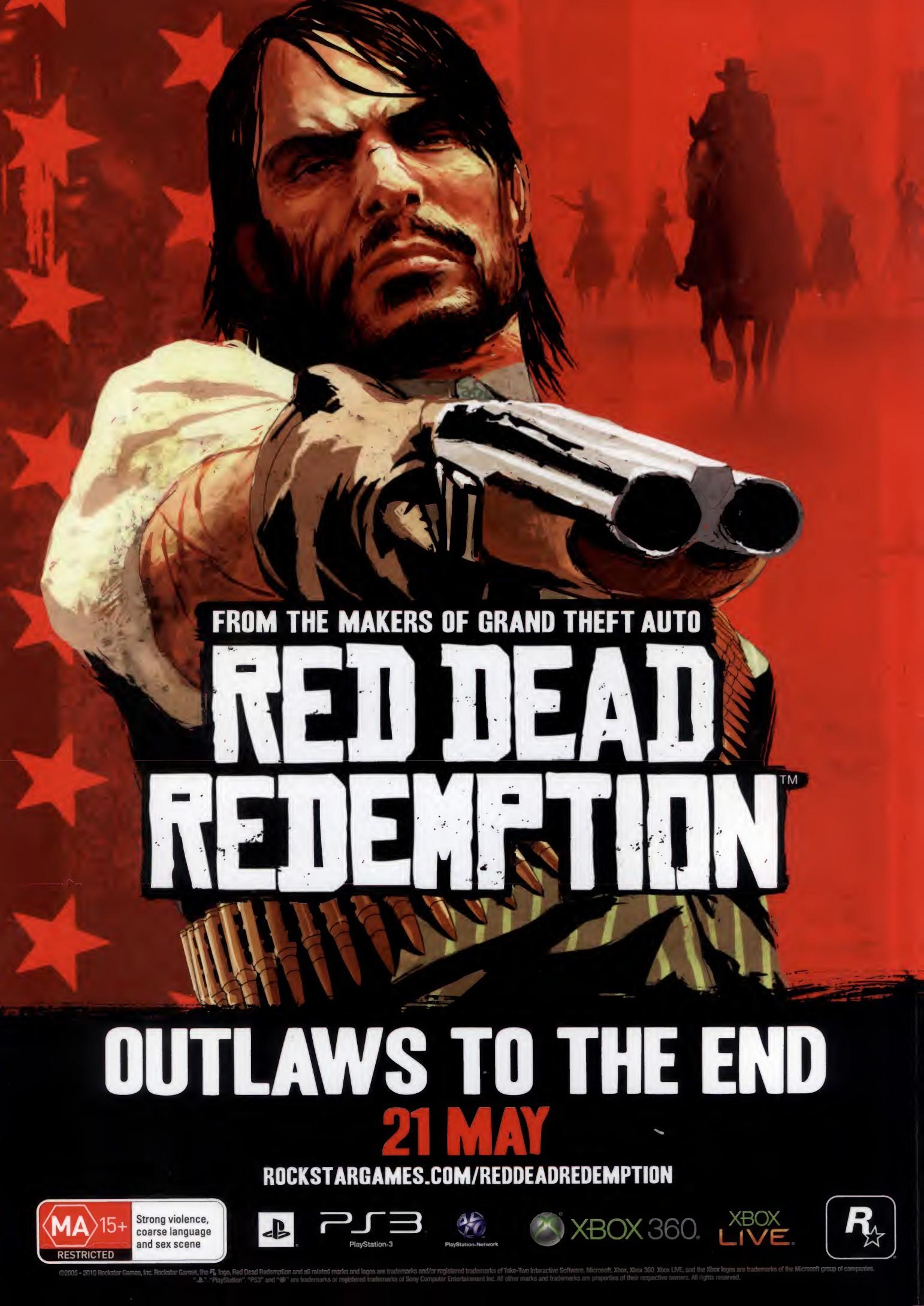
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OUTLAWS TO THE END

21 MAY

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Strong violence,
coarse language
and sex scene



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